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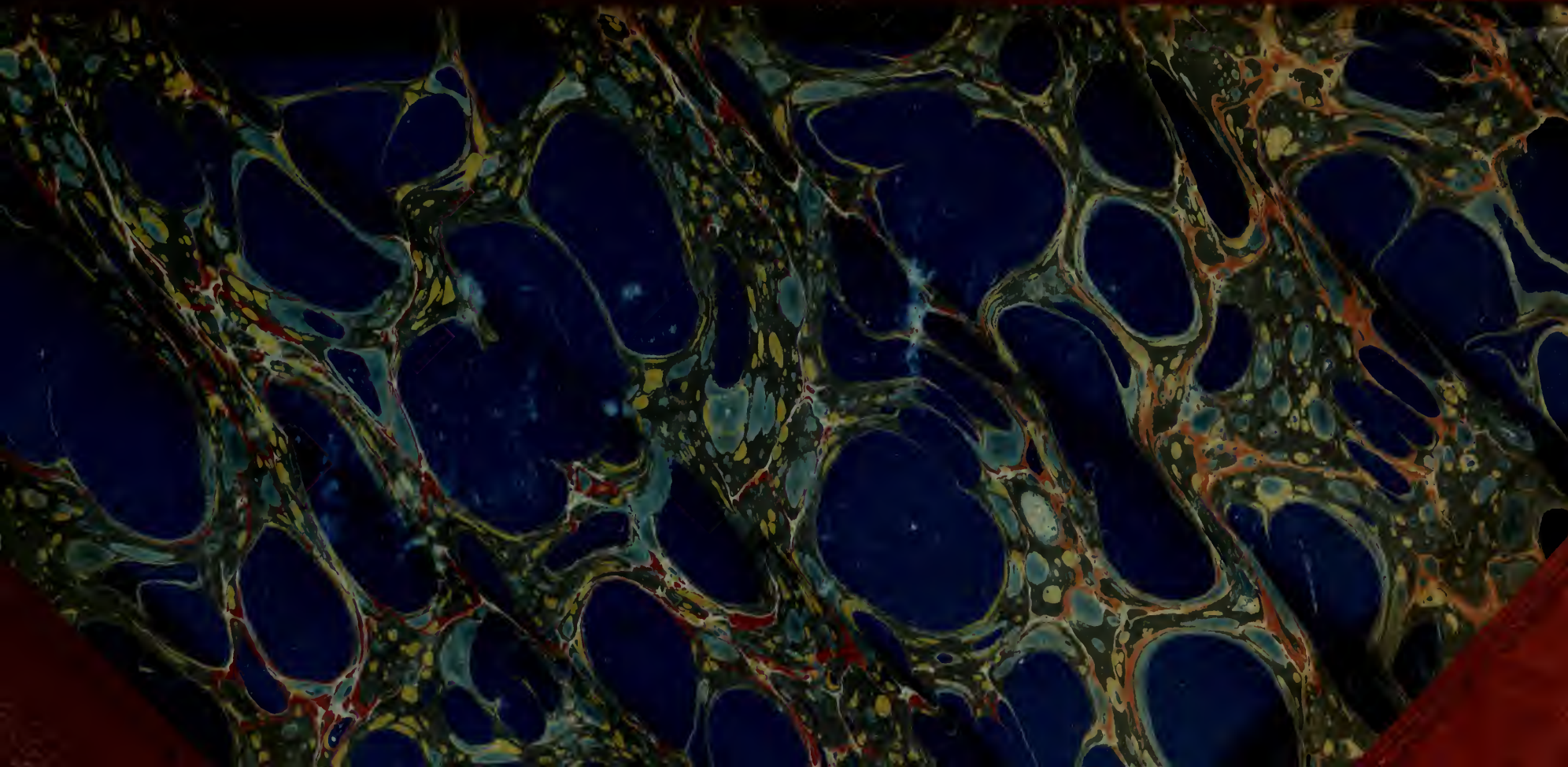

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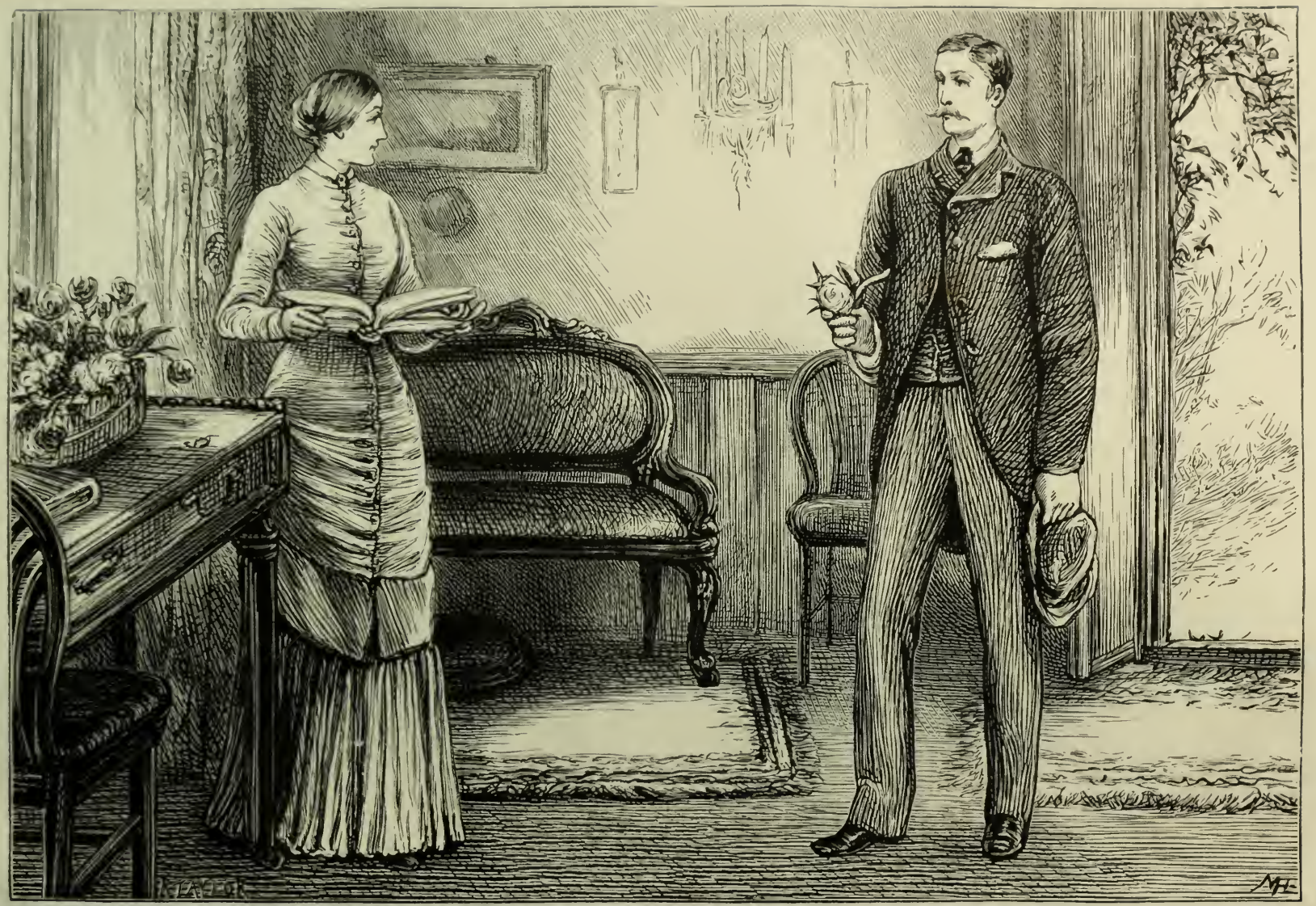

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXXVII.

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"It was not the light that made Godfrey stop short.
"Mrs. Mayne led her forward."
"She seemed to have forgotten him."
"At the end of the Avenue he passed Miss Dixon."
"They stood together at the window."
"'He's Sir Oracle here now,' said Nancy."

Illustrations to "The Channel Islands."

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1884.

THE WHITE WITCH.

CHAPTER I.

AN INTRUDER.

THE afternoon sun was shining on a fair scene within the borders of Lancashire and on a knot of women, gathered outside their cottage doors to discuss some news.

"Going to be married again, Sarah Bennett! With his first wife not cold in her grave! Well, I should never have thought it of Mr. Mayne."

"There's no knowing what men will do till they are tried," returned Sarah Bennett. "And, after all, poor Mrs. Mayne has been dead nigh upon two years now, come to think of it, and he is a fine-looking man still, and the Abbey must be lonely with no lady in it."

They turned their eyes towards Croxham Abbey, which stood hard by; and Sarah Bennett continued:

"I'd not be sorry to see a mistress at the head of it again, if it was only to take down Mrs. Garner a bit. The airs that woman is beginning to put on! She was mild as new milk in her lady's time; but now it's all 'Highty-tighty,' and 'My good woman' when she speaks to you—as if she thought herself one of the gentlefolks."

"Well now, I don't see it quite in the same light, Mrs. Bennett," spoke up Hetty Stow, whose husband was first cousin to the parish clerk. "I heard all about it this morning from Mrs. Garner herself—and I must say I've always found her sociable and pleasant. It does seem hard, after she has been housekeeper at the Abbey so many years, that she should run the risk of being put out of her ways, and perhaps of losing her place for a new mistress. One would not say so much if it were a lady we'd all known: but a foreigner, picked up in France!—a papist, maybe, who can't speak English and has heathenish ways!—that is trying!"

"A foreigner!" cried another gossip in alarm. "Well, I'm not bigoted,

as everybody knows, but I've heard of those mixed marriages before, and I don't like them; they never answer. It will be an ill day for the Abbey and the village when Mr. Mayne brings home a Frenchified madam to take the place of the poor dear lady that's in heaven."

"I'm not altogether sure she's a foreigner, Ann Pym," said Mrs. Stow. "All I heard was that it was somewhere in foreign parts that Mr. Mayne met her."

"Well, to my mind, that's worse," said Mrs. Ann Pym, gloomily. "I've heard tell that the English folk who live in foreign parts is mostly those that have made their own country too hot to hold them."

"There's good and bad of all sorts, at home and abroad," said Sarah Bennett. "If none but the bad sort went journeying there, Mr. Mayne himself would have stayed at home. Anyway, we've missed him; he is as pleasant and kindhearted a gentleman as you could find in all the country round; and it's better he should come back with a French wife than that he shouldn't come back at all. He is ten times more sociable with us than Mr. Godfrey is."

"Mr. Godfrey's good and pleasant at heart, but he has not been like himself since his mother died. I wonder how he takes this news?"

"It is worse for him than anybody," cried Hetty Stow. "Mrs. Garner said he was quite beat down when he got the letter this morning. He had one letter from his father and she had another. He shut himself up ——Why, there he is!—coming down the road!" she broke off, in excitement.

Sarah Bennett retired instinctively within her door. The other women drew together and watched the approaching figure stealthily.

It was that of a tall, slight young man, with high, square shoulders, a thin, fair face, the well-shaped nose somewhat long, a drooping, flaxen moustache, and but little expression generally in his deep-set grey eyes.

When he came to within twenty yards of the women, he opened a private gate, and disappeared from their sight between two high hedges and the clumps of lilac and laburnum trees, which were in bloom.

"He looks very *down*," whispered one of the watchers.

"He looks as black as thunder," added another.

"And enough to make him," commented Mrs. Bennett, emerging from her door, behind which she had peeped. "I wonder what he is going to the Vicarage for?"

"We did hear, me and Stow, that he was thought to be after one of the young ladies," said Stow's wife.

"Miss Elspeth is as pretty a little lass as one could wish to see," affirmed Sarah Bennett. "Did you hear which of the two young ladies it was, Mrs. Stow?"

"Well we fancied it must be Miss Matilda. She is the eldest, you know. It may not be either, after all; or he might change his mind."

With this brilliant remark, Mrs. Hetty Stow departed in the direction of her cottage, and the women dispersed.

In the meantime Godfrey Mayne made his way up the drive to the Vicarage, which stood some distance from the road in a large, oddly-shaped garden in which the Vicar drank in and thought out his sermons. The house was a plainly-built, ugly brick structure with a broad space of gravel in front, a small lawn on one side and a stable and outbuildings on the other. The Vicar's two youngest children, a dirty little boy in a disgraceful hat, and a girl a year or two older, fled among the shrubs at the visitor's approach. Mrs. Thornhill was at home, and in a few minutes Godfrey was sitting in the drawing-room in the presence of her and her two eldest daughters.

They were slim, fair, rather uninteresting-looking girls, inoffensively dressed and on the whole pleasant to look upon, as most healthy young Englishwomen are. They looked at Godfrey this afternoon with especial sympathy and interest. Mrs. Thornhill had entered upon the burning subject with very little delay.

"Is it really true that your father is about to marry again?"

"Worse than that—a thousand times worse," replied Godfrey. "He is married."

"Already!" said Mrs. Thornhill, shocked. "Are you sure?"

"Quite. I got a letter from him this morning saying that he was married two days ago at the Protestant church in Paris to a Mrs. Dixon; a widow whom he met at Nice a month or two ago, and knows nothing about, I feel sure. Can you understand a man's being so—so—taken in?"

"Hush, Godfrey; he is your father, remember. Perhaps she is really a very nice person, whom you will like yourself when you see her."

"Like a woman thrust into my mother's place!" cried poor Godfrey, his voice changing with excitement. "I should not like her if she were the nicest woman in the world; instead of some adventuress who has set herself out to entrap my poor simple-minded old father. Why, don't you see, she must have followed him? chased him from one end of France to the other? They would not journey together to Paris."

Mrs. Thornhill was silent.

"I've no doubt she thinks she has got a prize: a rich English widower, who can afford to travel about and enjoy himself, and who has a fine old country place at home, with nobody to interfere with her there, and no encumbrance in it save one son; a quiet, idle, harmless fellow, as I dare say my father described me ——"

Elspeth laughed.

"Well, she may find herself mistaken," continued Godfrey, glancing at the young girl. "The Abbey is a gloomy old place in itself, getting somewhat dilapidated as to its decorations, and I will take care to improve upon that for my lady's reception. I'll have the old tattered chintz covers put upon the drawing-room furniture; I'll turn the pictures to the walls. I'll give all the servants a holiday the day they are expected to arrive, and I'll have all the school children up to romp

in the garden and tell them to pick what they like. She will wish herself back in France again."

Mrs. Thornhill listened to this outburst with a smile, which she tried to repress. "What a boy he is still!" she thought.

"I'm sure you do not mean what you say, Godfrey," she said to him in a gentle tone. "It would be a very cruel way of treating a lady who is coming here as a stranger; and who never meant to do you any harm, after all. When do you expect them?"

"They will be here on Saturday. I shall be out. I shall go to Liverpool. I have some very important matters to see to there, and Saturday will suit me better than any other day," said Godfrey, disagreeably.

Mrs. Thornhill did not quite believe that he meant to fulfil this threat, but she used all the persuasion in her power to induce him to receive his father and his father's new wife amicably, impressing upon him the fact that now the marriage was once performed nothing he might do or say could undo it, and his resentment would only tend to make his own position uncomfortable. He listened pretty patiently to her kindly lecturing, but as she followed him to the door when he rose to go, with a last entreaty to him to show Christian forbearance, he bent his head with a whisper.

"There is one comfort for me in this business. Some former husband of hers is sure to turn up and claim her before long. I know what these Continental widows are!"

And before the Vicar's wife had had time to recover from the shock of this most wicked speech, Godfrey had left her, with defiance in his face.

She went to her husband's study and told him all this. Mr. Thornhill considered that her pity for the young man was in part thrown away.

"He wants rousing," said the clergyman. "If the coming of this step-mother shall effect that, so much the better. What is he good for? What does he do? Nothing. His father ought not to allow him to lead this moping, lazy, useless life. Why, Godfrey must be five-and-twenty years old."

"I suppose he is: but he does not look it: he is very young for his age," said Mrs. Thornhill. "He did not expect this, you see; it has come upon him like a blow: without any warning."

"Yes, and I know what will happen: he will be sulky and stiff and ungracious with the new comer for a week; and then, not because he remembers that he is wrong, but because it is too much trouble to keep up the stiffness, he will drift into easy indolence again."

"Ah, it was a sad pity his mother died; it was that which took all the life out of Godfrey. He was so fond of her; he never cared to be roving away from her as other young men rove. Now I think that what he wants is a wife; he has quiet, domestic tastes ——"

"To make a Darby to some Joan," interrupted the Vicar. "But he is not to be allowed to think that he has only to open his mouth for Matilda or Elspeth to drop into it, which I see is the idea you have in your mind. Any girl worth the having is worth the winning, and though our girls are not beauties or specially gifted in any way, they are good little lassies, worth the trouble of courting with a little more energy than Master Godfrey seems inclined to show."

Mrs. Thornhill listened submissively to this discourse, and remained firm in her opinion that what young Mr. Mayne wanted was a wife, and that he could not do better than look for one in her own garden of girls. She was not a match-maker: she held to the old-fashioned doctrine that love and marriage were things to be left in the hands of heaven; but Matilda was twenty-two and was already getting alarmed at the prospect of being an old maid, and Elspeth, who was nineteen and longing for more excitement than the quiet life of the Vicarage afforded, was madly anxious to be engaged before her elder sister. So that if Mr. Godfrey Mayne had concentrated his attentions upon either of the girls, he would have had little reason to fear that they would not be received.

Godfrey walked back to the Abbey moody and thoughtful, his mind filled with thoughts of vengeance against the scheming adventuress (as he assumed her to be) who had beguiled his father into marrying her. He pictured her to himself as he went along: a showy-looking woman very elaborately dressed, with an artificially good complexion and an artificially good manner, who would treat his father with indifference and himself with contempt. This fancy portrait of his step-mother worked his indignation up to a climax.

"I will never stay in the same house with her—and I am sure I will not be here to receive her. My father must say what he likes, but I cannot see the odious woman in my mother's place. How can he have been so taken in? The haste with which she has snapped him up might have put him on his guard—only that he is of the kindest and most unsuspicious nature. To-day is Wednesday: I'll betake myself to Liverpool between now and Saturday, and stay with Aunt Margaret for the present; or I'll go yachting with Mansfield or anything; and later my Uncle Abbotsford must find me a government post of some sort; but I won't come back here, and I won't see my step-mother."

He was not returning home by the front way, but went down a lane which led past the stables to the back gate of the Abbey garden.

Croxham Abbey was the most picturesque house for miles round. It was a large, long red-brick building, the roof of which was broken up by gables and turrets. It stood in a very retired situation, for the drive which led between two hay-fields straight up to the front gates, joined, not the high road, but a shady avenue leading from the high road to Croxham Church, whose grey square tower was visible, between the trees, from the Abbey windows. Only a few small trees of yew,

laburnum, and lilac stood in front of the spacious garden ; but there were tall elms and beeches behind the house, and from the left side stretched a wood which covered some acres of ground, through which ran a rough cart-track, where the village children and the younger Thornhills came to hunt for the first snowdrops and later for the first violets. To the right of the house was the rose garden, whose oddly-shaped beds and winding paths were only separated from the hay-field beyond by an iron railing. This garden extended for some distance behind the house, where it was well grown with shrubs and tall trees, and ended in a wild, carelessly-kept plantation, in which the birds built their nests.

The Abbey had, years ago, been found too large for the family that then inhabited it, and part of the building at the back had been let off to a small farmer and land agent, named Wilding. In his descendant's possession it still remained ; just as the larger portion of the structure had passed from father to son in that of their more important neighbours. The Abbey greenhouse marked the boundary between the two gardens ; and clumps of shrubs and trees hid the farmyard from the Abbey side ; the greater part of the farm-buildings, together with the hay-stacks and straw-stacks, were at a little distance from the Abbey, on the other side of the lane at the back.

It would have been a desolate place enough now, but for the faint farmyard sounds and the voices of the farmer and his people calling to each other from time to time across the lane. Some years ago the Abbey itself had been less silent. Godfrey had then been the eldest of three children, who had romped in what remained of the old cloisters, and played at ghosts in the corridors and passages, declining to find the huge refectory, which had been formally assigned to them as a play-room, big enough for their battles and their games. But Charles, the youngest, destined for the navy, went to sea, and was drowned on his second voyage ; the girl, who came between them, Isabel, had married early, and was now in India with her husband. Godfrey, the heir, had no profession. When he came down from Oxford he found his mother ailing. Devotedly attached to her, he never left home again during the whole of her prolonged illness. With her death a blight settled on his life : so that at five-and-twenty, his present age, his youth seemed to be over : he had grown cynical, indifferent, and for all the active interest he took in existence he might have been older than his cheerful and active father.

When Godfrey had nearly reached the gate in the lane which opened into the plantation at the back of the Abbey, he was met by a thin lad of about twenty, who was leading a wretched-looking old horse by a bit of rope, and encouraging the animal to better speed by all sorts of strange gestures and cries. It was Dick Wilding, the farmer's youngest son ; a poor, harmless, half-witted lad, with no ill-feeling against anyone in the world, save Godfrey Mayne. When both families were children, Dick had conceived a dog-like affection

for Charlie, the younger. When the latter went away to sea, Dick was heartbroken ; and later, when the news came of his death, his poor brain fixed the blame of it on Godfrey ; who had sometimes been impatient with the senseless child, and laughed at his brother's strong liking for him. Years had elapsed since Charlie was drowned, but in Dick's mind the remembrance of the trouble never faded, and his hatred of Godfrey was unabated. Sometimes he would mutter that he was his "enemy," sometimes that he was "the devil."

He burst out laughing now as he watched the young man coming along the lane. Godfrey did not look at him, but passed by with his eyes still on the ground. However, Dick was in a perverse mood and would not let him go quietly.

"Ho, ho, the Abbey will be a gay place now," he called out; discerning, with surprising adroitness, a new way to irritate the man he disliked, having caught up an idea from the gossip he had that day listened to. "You will be having a fine time of it, Master Godfrey, with the new madam about the place. I wish you joy, Master Godfrey; I wish you joy."

Godfrey turned round angrily. "Hold your tongue, Dick, or I'll have you sent away for a chattering fool."

"Ha, ha! If I was a fool you'd not mind, Master Godfrey. I'm no fool; I know what I'm saying. You can't send me away like Master Charlie. Ah, and I know more about him than you do : I'm no fool."

He went on more quietly, shaking his head and repeating this and similar words, while Godfrey, ashamed of having lost his temper with the half-witted lad, walked on to the gate, through which he passed into the plantation. But his irritation had not been improved by the encounter with Dick.

"I wonder who has been talking to him?" thought he, as he crossed the rose-garden. "Very ridiculous of them!"

It was about six o'clock, getting towards dinner-time. The flowers about him smelt so sweet, the hay-fields and the trees beyond looked so pretty in the declining sun, that Godfrey forgot his ill-temper, stopped to look at one of the early budding roses and to give a glance about him.

"That rose tree would never have been allowed to straggle about like this two years ago," said he to himself, looking at a gloire-de-Dijon which had broken away from the nails that had fastened it to the drawing-room wall.

It had been a favourite flower of his mother's, and Godfrey took out his pocket-knife and cut off one of the half-blown blossoms.

"I wish I could cut them all off and carry them away with me before Saturday!" he cried aloud, in a wringing accent of pain.

He could not *bear* the thought of this strange woman's coming to enjoy the flowers that his mother had trained and loved. He wished, now that it was all too late, that he had accepted his father's proposi-

tion that he should go abroad with him, "for a change." This miserable trouble might not have happened. But he had not.

Shutting up his knife again, the rose still in his hand, he vaulted into the drawing-room through the open French window. There seemed to be more light than usual in the not much used room. The blind of the other window was up, letting in the afternoon sun upon the carpet and the somewhat old-fashioned furniture. But it was not the light that made Godfrey stop short in the middle of the room, dumb with surprise and something more.

Standing at a table, a book of photographs in her hand, was a lady in a plain grey stuff travelling dress. She turned with a start towards the window by which Godfrey made his abrupt entrance; then, as he stood still in silent astonishment, she came towards him with a rather hesitating but gracious manner.

"You are Godfrey, I am sure. I am your father's wife. We have taken you rather by surprise, but—you will shake hands?"

Godfrey took her outstretched hand, but his own was trembling. He understood the reason now, or one of the reasons, for his father's marriage, and he already himself half forgave the act. For at the moment of his first look into the grave, gentle face of the lady before him, he had recognised an undefinable likeness to his dead mother:—which had, in truth, first attracted Mr. Mayne's attention to her. The resemblance was not strong enough to be very marked: but it was enough to break down Godfrey's angry prejudice. She was not very young, and she did not try to hide the fact; her figure was mature, her fair, rather plump face had lost its bloom; she was a sweet-faced, gentle-mannered lady of two or three-and-forty. He began to apologise for his abrupt entrance.

"It is we who ought to apologise," said she, smiling. "It was very hot in Paris, and your father began to sigh for the country; so we crossed last night and came on at once. I believe my husband wished to avoid any demonstration by coming unexpectedly," she concluded, rather nervously.

"Where is my father?" asked Godfrey.

"I believe he has gone to look for you," she replied, her manner becoming hesitating again. "I think he was afraid—we were both afraid—you would be angry at his marriage. I am very grateful to you for receiving me so kindly."

Godfrey was disarmed. "How could I do otherwise?" he rejoined, kindly and courteously.

And before Mr. Mayne found his way back to the drawing-room where he had left his wife, Godfrey had given to his step-mother the half-blown bud from his mother's rose-tree.

CHAPTER II.

MAKING WAY.

THE second Mrs. Mayne, in spite of the prejudice which rose against her before her arrival, took favour by storm in her new home. Each one of her husband's acquaintances who called upon her, every villager who met her, liked the gentle lady with the sweet voice and gracious manner, who was always the same, whom no gust of ill-temper, no outbreak of impatience ever disturbed. She was quite an ideal wife to Mr. Mayne; who, although a man of kindly disposition and fairly good temper, was sometimes moved by gout and minor evils to fits of irritability, which she bore with a placid, smiling patience that disarmed him. Submissive was she to every look and word of her new lord and master, studying his pleasure with a serene devotion which quickly established her hold over his heart and mind; a hold that even the suspicious Godfrey never dreamed of attributing to any but the most innocent motives. Neither was her treatment of himself that of a crafty and designing woman.

In the first days Godfrey, drawn towards her by her likeness to his dead mother, had shown a disposition to linger about her, to wait upon her, to do her bidding dutifully; in fact, to let her take the place to him in trifles, as she had done to his father, of the late Mrs. Mayne. But she was too unexacting for that. She seemed to forget herself totally in consideration for them. Not that she paid great attention to Godfrey: she was too much absorbed in making herself indispensable to his father. She saw that perfect care was given by the servants to their young master's comforts—which Mrs. Garner, hitherto so efficient, inwardly resented as needless. "As if she could not trust me," thought the housekeeper, "that she should say please see to this, and see to that!" Mrs. Mayne would study Godfrey's tastes when ordering dinner; if he were caught in a bad storm of rain, she would ring to say that dry clothes should be laid out for him; and she never used the carriage without first enquiring whether he wanted the horses.

But Godfrey's little devotional services she did not need at all. She had no trifling errands on which to send him; no particular preference for any one flower over another, and was quite content with the regulation bouquets, consisting of the blossoms which could be best spared, sent in by the gardener. She never made lists of the books she wanted from the library, because she never felt a desire to read any particular book, but took up any that might be lying about, and never knew which volume she was "in."

She somewhat scandalised the better-informed among the guests at a dull dinner-party given in her honour, by naming Alfred de Musset as her favourite poet. But upon questioning her on the subject next day with some interest and curiosity, Godfrey found she had mentioned

that unorthodox writer merely because she had heard French poetry was better than English, and de Musset was the only French poet whose works she had read—having read two of his sonnets.

The poor of the neighbourhood took to her. She did not offer to go district visiting, but she learnt and remembered the names of all, and her kind smile was ready for them. She took a class at the Sunday school one afternoon in the absence of its regular teacher; this was considered a great condescension in the mistress of the Abbey, and much increased her popularity; although she proved quite curiously incompetent as a teacher, and showed a naïve ignorance of theology in general.

Only one dissentient voice interrupted the general chorus of approval of the new-comer: it was that of Matilda Thornhill, who bore a family reputation of being sharp of tongue.

"I don't quite understand why we should all be called upon to fall down and worship Mrs. Mayne," Matilda complained one day, when the family had assembled in the drawing-room after their early dinner. "Wherever I go I am asked if I don't think her sweet, and whether I ever saw so pleasant a smile. And of course I say she is sweet, and I never have seen a smile worthy of the name before. But to tell the truth, I am getting rather tired of that perpetual smile; I wish I could get her to frown at something."

"She leaves the frowns to Godfrey," observed the Vicar, quietly, rather amused by his daughter's speech.

"Even Godfrey has been conquered by that irresistible smile, papa," resumed Matilda. "When they were here yesterday and she said she hoped it would not rain on Sunday, but that after all perhaps the country wanted rain, and so we must not complain if it came, I'm sure he sat gazing at her in speechless admiration."

Mrs. Thornhill laughed a little, but looked at her husband to reprove. He said nothing: and Matilda, thus encouraged, went on, until he interrupted her.

"With all due deference to your judgment, Matilda, I think Mrs. Mayne manages both father and son extremely well."

"Yes, papa, I don't deny that. I only complain that we are all expected to look upon her as a very remarkable woman, when she is really the ideal of the commonplace."

The Vicar began to stir his coffee very gravely, with his eyes down. His daughter waited, expecting a mild rebuke. At last he looked up and said, quietly:

"Upon what grounds do you call her commonplace?"

"Well, papa," answered Matilda, "first there is her appearance. I don't mean to say that she does not look like a lady, but she looks like so many other ladies! If you wanted someone to find her out in a crowd of others, you could not think of anyone distinguishing characteristic by which she might be known from the rest—until she talks, and then there is the smile."

"Now to me there is one very striking feature in her face," said the Vicar. "It attracted my attention much more than the smile which displeases you: it is the straight line of the mouth and the obstinate way in which it closes. I pity poor Mayne if his new wife should take a dislike to any of his whims or fancies. Perhaps, though, it does not become us to be too hard upon that quality."

The British virtue of pigheadedness distinguished every member of the Thornhill family, and shone very conspicuously in the Vicar himself; who was perhaps not as much ashamed of it as he ought to have been.

"Well, at least, papa," persisted Matilda, "you will admit that she never says anything we have not heard many times before; even about the interesting places she has been to. If you ask her a question about Nice, or Paris, or Italy, she never tells you anything worth hearing in her answer, and drifts back again as quickly as she can into small talk and smiles."

"Perhaps she does not want to talk about the places she has been to," suggested Elspeth. She was a pretty, silly little creature, much more accomplished than her sister, but much less intelligent. Her father smiled at her and replied to Matilda:

"Mrs. Mayne may be wise in keeping to what she can do best; she smiles very prettily; and you are the first person who has taken offence at her small talk. There is one thing that even you must give her credit for; she is one of the kindest-hearted women I have ever met. The other day, on my way to Biddleforth, as I passed Gibson's cottage I saw him holding that young rascal, Tom Bennett, by the ear; he had been caught robbing the hen-roost. Mrs. Mayne was passing in the pony-carriage; she saw the boy caught, and she had got out to plead with old Gibson to let him go. He held out a long time, but she stuck to her point. So Gibson let the young thief off with a shaking, and then I felt bound to remonstrate against her interference with the course of justice. But she only said: 'Oh, Mr. Thornhill, I think the poor boy was sorry!' But I told her I knew him, and she need not think he was sorry for anything except that he had not got clear off with the eggs."

"But I don't think it is right of her to interfere like that," broke in Mrs. Thornhill, with some anxiety. "When people do wrong they must be punished for it. Dale told me that Mrs. Mayne came into the school on Friday, and begged off all the children who had punishment tasks to do. And it is the second time she has done so. Could you not speak to her, Robert, and explain to her that it is wrong, and unfair to the good ones? They will think they can all be as naughty as they like if they get let off like that."

"I am not sure that the danger is not on the other side; I think we have rather a tendency to over-punish children," said the Vicar, reflectively.

"Oh, then if Mrs. Mayne is to be allowed to beg them off when-

ever she visits the school, we may as well do without punishments at once: and then what will the children grow up like?" asked poor Mrs. Thornhill, aghast at the thought of the havoc such a revolution would work in the morals of Croxham.

"I expect they would grow up, all the same, into much such men and women as their fathers and mothers," murmured the Vicar in the particularly slow, soft tones he always fell into when discussion threatened to grow warm. "It is nearly always the same children who have to be kept in over and over again, and the same who never have any fault found with them. I am inclined to think that many of the incorrigibly naughty ones would be good if they could. But I think we need not be afraid that Mrs. Mayne's merciful spirit will do any great harm."

Mrs. Thornhill listened to this discourse in dutiful silence, but with tightly-compressed lips and flushing cheeks. What strangely perverse spirit could induce him to unfold this subversive doctrine in the very presence of the children and their young governess?

"Dale said there were tears in her eyes when she asked him to forgive Mary Dodd for breaking that window," said Matilda. "She certainly is very tender-hearted, to be so anxious to shield these parish children whom she hasn't known long enough to care for. Or else she must have an accountable sympathy for wrongdoers."

"Perhaps she has done something very wicked herself once, and that makes her sorry for other people," suggested Elspeth.

Everybody laughed. It was just one of the silly speeches she was always making, drawing upon herself general derision. Even little Annette cried "Oh, Elspeth!" The unfortunate girl grew crimson, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Fancy sweet, placid Mrs. Mayne the author of a daring robbery, or committing a murder!" exclaimed Matilda. "The goose that you are, Elspeth!"

"Don't tease her, Matilda," pleaded Mrs. Thornhill.

"I don't see why you should think me so absurd," said poor Elspeth. "Before Mrs. Mayne came, people thought she was going to be a dreadful woman, nothing too bad to be possible about her. Well, nobody knows any more about her past life now than they did before ——"

"And you decline to be taken in, like the rest of us, by her simple face and her good-tempered smile. Is that it, Elspeth?" asked the Vicar, smiling.

"No, papa, I like her very well; but I don't like everybody to laugh at me," said she, timidly.

"Well, well, child, all this is nonsense, of course," said the Vicar. "Mrs. Mayne is very nice and I dare say we shall continue to like her. Dry your tears."

There was really, on the whole, so little to discuss about Mr. Mayne's second wife, and not any question as to the good taste he

had shown in making so thoroughly a suitable choice, that the flutter caused by the event was over very quickly, and she settled down to contented life at the Abbey, in the easiest way in the world. All that anybody cared to know about her previous life was known : that her first husband had been a doctor in Norfolk, that since his death, three years ago, she had lived abroad, that it was at Nice that Mr. Mayne had first met, and at Paris that he had married her. Even Mrs. Garner, the housekeeper, and Hawkins, the butler, who had had their prejudices against the new mistress of the Abbey, were won over by her sweet temper and gentle consideration of all about her. She inspired affection naturally ; so naturally and entirely that it was impossible for anyone in his senses not to like her ; and it was appropriately left to the imbecile Dick Wilding to prove the one exception to the rule.

Godfrey and his step-mother were walking round the garden together one evening about a fortnight after the coming home of the latter. They had just returned from a garden party, and were discussing the people they had met there.

"I hate garden parties," said Godfrey. "They are the slowest things I know."

"Well, they are not exciting, of course. But I like to see all the pretty young girls looking so fresh and bright in their light dresses ; and that is a thing that you ought not to be too blasé to admire."

"I don't think one requires to be very blasé to fail to admire the girls about here," returned Godfrey. "What has become of the famous and lovely Lancashire witches I don't know, but we do not see them now. There has not been a decent-looking girl in this part of the county within the memory of man."

"Godfrey!"

"Well, try to remember one among the girls you saw to-day who would be looked at twice, say, in Hyde Park in the season."

"I remember several. Miss Mansfield ; Charlotte Harley ; our neighbours the Thornhills. *They* looked charmingly simple and fresh in their white frocks. I know you admire them, Godfrey."

"Has my father been talking to you about the advisability of getting married, and telling you to sound me on the subject?" interrupted Godfrey, turning to face his step-mother with a penetrating look.

She laughed, and a little guilty flush rose to her placid face. "You must not be angry with him or with me for discussing it. I took it rather as a compliment to myself that he should do so."

Godfrey felt intensely surprised. What on earth could have put such an idea into his father's head? Did he want him gone, that the Abbey might be left free for himself and the new wife?

"If I could meet a young woman just like you, I might think of it," he said, gallantly. "If you had a daughter, now ——"

"I have a daughter," interrupted Mrs. Mayne, rather hesitatingly.

"Have you?" asked he, with sudden interest. "And you have never said a word about her! Where is she? Tell me, that I may go and fall in love and marry her at once."

"I cannot send you off on such a wildgoose chase as that."

"Seriously speaking, though," resumed Godfrey, "how is it that I never heard of her before?"

"I wonder you have not," said Mrs. Mayne. "Your father and I often talk about her. She was with me when I first met him. He is always asking me to have her here."

"Well, why don't you? Where is she now?"

"She is travelling in France with an old lady who has adopted her," replied Mrs. Mayne, rather nervously.

"That must be a dull life for a girl."

"Not for her. Mary has money of her own, so that she is independent, but she prefers that kind of life. She is very quiet, and I am afraid you would say very uninteresting. She never talks much, and she dislikes strangers."

"All that interests me. I want to see her. Couldn't the old lady spare her for a little while?"

"I am afraid not. And it would give Mary no pleasure to come."

"Not to see you!"

"Even that would scarcely compensate her for the misery of coming among strangers; she is so studious and shy."

"Studious!" said Godfrey, dubiously. Then after a minute's pause he continued persistently: "But you say she has seen my father, so he is not a stranger. Surely she would not be afraid of me!"

"I don't know, I am sure," said Mrs. Mayne. "All I know is that she cannot come."

"Then I shall live and die a bachelor. But—what makes you both so anxious that I should settle down into matrimony?" continued Godfrey. "Do you know, that puzzles me."

"It is not to settle you down, but to wake you up. And it is your father who is anxious, not I," she added, nervously. "I told him I saw no reason why you should be hurried into marriage before you felt inclined for it. He says you are listless and do not take much interest in anything."

"So I am to have a wife for an occupation? Very well; I dare say you are right: only please choose the lady for me and save me the trouble of doing anything more than go through the ceremony. I see you have an eye upon the Thornhill girls. Now, which is to be the happy instrument of my regeneration: pink-eyed Matilda with her sarcastic speeches, or pretty little bread-and-butter Elspeth?"

And Godfrey, who had been hovering between real anger and sham anger throughout this speech, waited for her answer with a somewhat disagreeable expression of face.

"Is it not rather unfair of you to be annoyed with me, Godfrey?" asked Mrs. Mayne in a gentle tone. "It can be nothing to me

whether you marry or remain single, except that I wish you to be as happy as possible in your future life."

"I see. Yes, I beg your pardon," said Godfrey, ashamed of his show of irritation. "The fact is, seriously, this: I have got over the age when a young man thinks 'every lass a queen;' and I have not yet got to that when a man wants someone young and fair and sweet about him, and feels that, so that she be but pleasant of face and pleasant of temper, one girl will do as well as another. I am just old enough and young enough to be critical—over-critical; to admire a woman with something more ideal about her than these very nice lady-like girls have; a woman who can excite my imagination, and make me think she has a thousand times more charms than—than she really has, perhaps. I dare say I am in the mood to fall in love with some clever, plainish woman who dresses perfectly; but with Matilda or Elspeth—no. Do not look troubled," he added, laughing. "My dangerous state of mind will pass away very quietly; and at thirty-five, or so, I shouldn't wonder if I were to lay my uninjured and carefully-preserved heart at the feet of one of the very women whom now, at twenty-five, I scorn. They will be 'getting on' and 'going off' by that time. And think what a prize I shall be then!"

Mrs. Mayne laughed also; and as he stopped to replace her shawl, which had slipped from her shoulders, she started with a low exclamation. They were standing a few yards from the wall which separated the Abbey garden from the Wildings' farmyard. The wall was almost hidden by the shrubs and trees on the garden side, but Godfrey's glance, following that of his step-mother, fell on the grinning face of Dick, who had mounted on an empty barrel in the yard and was able to rest his chin on the wall and peer at them between the branches.

"Who is that?" asked Mrs. Mayne. "I have seen him before, and once or twice met him in the lanes. He always looks at me so spitefully that I am half afraid of him."

"Get down. What are you doing up there?" called out Godfrey.

"Don't scold him; he is not doing anything wrong. Who is he?"

"It is only Wilding's son, an imbecile. You need not fear him. He never does any harm, but he takes the most absurd dislikes to people, and then delights in annoying them by his chatter and grimaces."

Dick had disappeared behind the wall.

"Poor fellow!" she said. "I am afraid he has taken a dislike to me. How can I let him know that I mean well to him?"

"You had better leave him alone," advised Godfrey. "If he has taken one of his mad prejudices against you, nothing will uproot it, and if you make overtures of peace to him, he will misunderstand you and perhaps frighten you. Nothing will alter his hatred of me;

and I expect if he has taken a dislike to you, it is because he has seen you with me."

"But I must let him know I don't wish to hurt him; I can't bear to be disliked, even by that poor lad," persisted Mrs. Mayne. "There must be some way to his affections. What does he care for most?"

"I don't think he cares much for anybody or anything save an old horse of his father's, which he rides up and down the lane at the back fifty times a day; and then leads by a bit of rope when the animal is too tired to carry him longer."

"Then he is cruel?"

"No, he does not mean to be. You may hear him expostulating with the horse, and putting it to him as a friend that he ought not to give in like that. I think he is happy in his way; but I would not interfere with him if I were you."

Mrs. Mayne said no more upon the subject; but there was a set expression about her mouth which her step-son had not yet learned to read.

Two days after this, as he was crossing the garden, he heard cries from the lane at the back. Thinking he recognised the voice he hurried through the plantation and met his step-mother just as she was running to the gate. A small stone whizzed past his head at the same moment, and he was in time to see that it was thrown by Dick Wilding. He stood with one arm over the neck of his old horse, and was uttering angry, excited cries.

With one short word, Godfrey made for him, seized him by the collar, and began to administer with his cane a sharp stroke or two. Dick took the correction in cowering silence, uttering no word, no cry. Mrs. Mayne came running up, and seized the punishing arm.

"Godfrey, Godfrey, how can you be so cruel, so wicked!" she cried, in a passion of pity and indignation.

"Cruel! wicked!—do you know that he was throwing stones at you?" cried Godfrey, staying the thrashing but not releasing his hold of the culprit.

"But he did not mean anything. He thought I was about to hurt his horse. It was all a mistake—he did not understand. Do let him go! You must let him go." Then turning to Dick, who glowered at her angrily but seemed too much confused to speak, she said: "I was not going to hurt your horse, only to pat his neck. Indeed I would not hurt you or your horse for the world. I only wanted to show you that I am not an enemy, but a friend; and now I have brought this upon you. I am so very sorry."

She gently took his thin rough hand in hers; her soft voice was shaking with distress. Dick sullenly allowed her to shake his hand; but there was no softening, no gleam of intelligence in his vacant, shifting glance, until she attempted to stroke his horse's neck in token of good faith and reconciliation. Then he woke up into fiery excitement.

"Don't touch Smiler," he shouted. "I won't have you touch him. Leave him alone, I tell you!"

Godfrey's hand was again laid upon his collar; but the agony in his step-mother's face as she looked up at him, with a little cry, made him release the lad once more.

"Now, will you be kind enough to go indoors?" said he to her, rather impatiently. "You look very white; this has shaken you. I have something to say to Dick; I will not be harsh, I promise you."

"Let me hear what you have to say to him, Godfrey. You have scolded him enough. It was all my fault: he mistook me. You must let him go; and you must come indoors with me."

She spoke pleadingly, but with a dogged pertinacity in voice and manner which showed a determination to carry her point. Godfrey yielded; dismissing Dick and his poor old favourite with a glance that intimated their settlement was only deferred. But he and his step-mother had scarcely reached the gate before she spoke.

"Godfrey, I want you to give me your word that you will let this unfortunate incident rest here, and that you will never refer to it again in any way, either to your father, or Mr. Wilding, or Dick, or anyone; and that you will not seek to punish him further."

"I cannot promise that," said Godfrey, promptly.

She turned from him, saying no more, and went on to the house. Godfrey felt that she was intensely angry.

When they met at dinner her eyes were red, her face was pale, and she looked really ill. Mr. Mayne seemed to detect that something was amiss, and was inquisitive and anxious, but she said not a word; neither, of course, did Godfrey. After dinner, he followed her at once to the drawing-room.

"Of course I will not say anything more to that fellow, or punish him further for his amusing games, if you insist," he said. "But I think it is a pity you should make yourself ill about such a trifle."

"Oh, Godfrey, it is not a trifle! And I am so glad! Thank you very, very much," she added, holding out her plump hand to him in great relief. "He is not much better than an idiot."

"Very little; he is called the Idiot Dick all over Croxham. What makes you so singularly tender-hearted?" added Godfrey, curiously. "You seem to feel a strange sort of sympathy for the undeserving. I think"—laughing—"you must have a perverted moral sense. Otherwise you would not always want to shelter those who have done wrong."

She did not answer at once: and when he looked at her he saw that her smooth, placid face looked troubled, and that on her cheeks there was a bright red flush.

"I think those are the people who want it most," she said in a very low voice.

And Godfrey was considering her face and her answer with a vague feeling of wonder and interest, when his father came in.

CHAPTER III.

STARTLED.

GODFREY MAYNE'S surprise and admiration at his step-mother's tenderness of heart had not at all subsided, when they were aroused afresh some few days later by her reception of the news of a tragedy, which had occurred in an outlying district of Croxham parish. The wife of a labourer had, in a fit of drunken anger, struck one of her step-children with an iron saucepan, inflicting a blow, the effects of which killed the lad. It was Mr. Mayne who brought home the tidings.

"Poor woman! how I pity her!" exclaimed Mrs. Mayne.

Her husband stared. "Pity! My dear Laura, that is not the common view taken of the affair."

"But she did not know what she was doing. You say she was not sober."

"That makes two offences instead of one. She got tipsy, which was wrong, and she caused the death of her step-son, which was worse. I hope you do not defend such an action as that."

"I begin to feel uncomfortable," said Godfrey, with mock solemnity.

But the utter seriousness of Mrs. Mayne was not to be shaken. Godfrey began to look at her with an intent curiosity, as she continued to plead the cause of the guilty woman; suddenly noticing this in the middle of her speech, she blushed, faltered, and dropped into silence.

Later in the evening, however, as Godfrey, strolling in the garden for the enjoyment of a quiet cigar, was passing the drawing-room window, he heard her imploring her husband to use all the influence he possessed to have the charge of murder against the woman commuted to that of manslaughter, at the coroner's inquest. Godfrey strolled on, in reflection.

"Nothing ever disturbs her placid contentment save the thought of people getting punished," commented he. "There must be some reason for it in so tranquil a nature as hers is. Someone she was interested in must have done something wrong at some time or other: she is not the sort of woman to have done anything out of the beaten track herself. Perhaps old Dixon was a bad lot? Very likely. That would explain her devotion to my father. I must find out all about him some day, if I can do it without hurting her feelings. I wonder what her daughter is like? And why we have heard so little about her?"

Mr. Mayne evidently wished the young lady to come to Croxham; Mrs. Mayne as evidently appeared to wish to keep her away.

While matters were in this state, the following advertisement appeared in the second column of the *Times*.

"To M— D—. If you have broken off all communication with the unprincipled persons who enslaved you in R— two years and

a half ago, and are willing to re-open correspondence with your mother she may ultimately receive you back on certain conditions."

Mrs. Mayne and Godfrey had driven to Cheston that morning, and had got the *Times* at the station. Godfrey had been glancing over it in the brougham, when Mrs. Mayne suddenly tore off the upper part of the first page and wrapped it round one of the little parcels she was carrying.

"But—do you see what you are doing?" cried Godfrey.

"It doesn't matter, it is only the advertisment sheet: all my needles were dropping out," said she, tranquilly. "Where are we going now?"

"To the photographer's. Aunt Madge—Mrs. Penteith, you know—insists on having my portrait for her birthday. I always 'come out' looking more like a guy than before, but she does not mind that. You won't wait, will you?"

"Yes, I will, if you are not long. Your father wants me to be 'taken,' so I'll see how they do them."

So they both got out at the photographer's, and Mrs. Mayne looked through the cases while Godfrey went into the studio.

"Are these all people who—" she began, carelessly, to the girl in attendance; when suddenly she broke off in her speech, and remained staring fixedly at the case in front of her.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said the girl, watching her curiously.

Mrs. Mayne recovered her self-command with a start; and then, noticing the attendant's eyes fixed inquiringly upon her, she pointed to the portrait of a young girl.

"What is the name of that lady?"

"The *lady*, ma'am?"— for the attendant had thought she was looking at the picture next it.

"Yes, the lady."

"That is one of Mr. Greville Masterton's daughters. He is the Rector of Cheston."

"She is singularly like a young girl I used to know. Were all these portraits taken here—and lately?"

"They were all taken here, ma'am, but some of them a long while back—before I came. I have been here twelve months."

"This is Mrs. Underwood, of Croxham Grange, is it not?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And who is this? A son of Mrs. Underwood's?"—It was the portrait of a very young man with a weak, handsome face.

"No, ma'am, I don't think so," hesitated the girl. "Oh, no, I remember: it is the portrait of a poor young gentleman who was murdered abroad in a very mysterious manner. I do not know the story, but I heard two gentlemen talking of it here the other day: the one was telling the other."

"Dear me, how sad!" said Mrs. Mayne, after a moment's pause. "What was—his name?"

"I don't remember, madam; but I can ask ——"

"Oh, no, don't trouble to do that. Did he live near here?"

"I don't think so, ma'am. I am but a stranger here. It was a dreadful murder, I believe, and the people have not been discovered yet."

"What a sad story!" murmured Mrs. Mayne again; and she passed on to the next case.

Godfrey came in. He stopped short in his first words to look down at his step-mother. "Why, what is the matter? What has happened?"

"Nothing has happened. Why?" added she, as she hurried him out of the shop.

"You look so ill; so—different; just as if you had had some terrible fright."

"I was standing in a draught and I got chilled," she replied.

But a draught that takes the colour from your very lips on a hot day in July is not easy to find, and Godfrey wondered. He said no more, for he began to understand that it was of no use to try to find out by questioning more than his step-mother chose to tell.

If any doubt had existed in his mind on that point, an event which happened a few days later would have dissipated it. They were all at breakfast; and Godfrey, having by some strange chance come down in time, was there when the letters were opened. Mrs. Mayne had begun to read one, the envelope of which bore a French postmark, when she uttered an involuntary cry of surprise and annoyance.

"What is it?" asked her husband.

"Oh, nothing; only a letter from Mary."

"What about? What does she say?"

"I don't know yet," she answered, and put the letter into her pocket, unfinished.

Mr. Mayne was rather inquisitive; he had, moreover, a suspicion that something was being kept back from him. "May I see the letter, Laura?"

She hesitated. "It is full of nonsensical chit-chat, I don't want you to laugh at my daughter. Won't you trust to my description of its contents?"

"Of course if you decline to let me see it, I must," answered he, coldly.

She looked crestfallen and disturbed, and the plump white hands trembled as she poured out the coffee, as Godfrey saw; the tears were gathering in her soft blue eyes. Breakfast went on in silence. But when they rose from table, Mrs. Mayne, who may have gathered wisdom in her former married state, stopped her husband on his way to the door, held out her daughter's letter, and spoke meekly:

"Will you give it back to me when you have read it, Henry? I have not finished it myself, yet."

"No, no, my dear," said he, conquered at once and refusing to take it. "I don't want to read your letter; at least until you have

done so. I always like to hear news of little pale Mary, who so much interested me."

Godfrey wondered whether she had calculated upon this effect of her offer, for she slipped the letter back into her pocket immediately. But Mr. Mayne's awakened curiosity had yet to be satisfied.

"You can let me see it by-and-by, you know, Laura."

He was obstinate too; so the truth came out, when she found there could be no escape.

"I was only afraid of disturbing you," she said. "Madame de Breteuil is dead."

"Dead! Dear me! Then where is the poor child going? She must come here at once, Laura. You know I always wanted her to come."

"You see! I knew it would disturb you and make you anxious; you are so kindhearted. Mary is quite safe; she is staying in the house of an English clergyman, who is doing temporary duty at Dinan."

"That's all very well for the moment. But she must come here."

"She talks of—of entering a sisterhood. You ——"

"A *what?*" interrupted Mr. Mayne.

Mrs. Mayne her bit lips. "A sisterhood," she repeated. "Quite a superior one; where only gentlewomen are received," she concluded, nervously, perceiving the astounded look of her hearers. "You know how shy and reserved Mary is. She likes nursing, and district-visiting ——"

"She can have as much district visiting as she likes here; they will be only too glad to get her. Surely you will not allow your own daughter to go drifting about the world without any protection, when there is a home ready and open for her. She is a dear, lady-like little girl," added Mr. Mayne, "and I shall be as proud of her as if she were a daughter of my own. Give me the clergyman's name and address? I will write to him and to Mary also, and ask him to see her off to England without delay. We will try to bring the roses into her pale cheeks—and find her a husband, perhaps. She would make an excellent wife for a parson. Come, Laura—the address."

Very reluctantly, Mrs. Mayne took out her letter and read the address; and he went off to the library. Godfrey, who had been a silent spectator and listener, strolled into the garden. He wondered a little—and he was beginning not to like Miss Dixon; she was the type of young lady he did not care for. Small, pale, shy, demure, good, devoted to district visiting, to nursing, and a capital wife for a parson!

But Godfrey had noticed about his step-mother's mouth, as she took out the letter and read the clergyman's address, the very same look of dogged determination that he had seen there before. For some reason or other it was evident that she did not wish her daughter to come to the Abbey; and, remembering how resolutely she had stuck to her point on other occasions, he was interested to see how the struggle

between the two wills, hers and his father's, would end. As he went back indoors, his father beckoned him into the library: an oak wainscoted room, lined with dull-looking volumes, which nobody had the bad taste to disturb.

"Sit down, Godfrey. I have been writing to this Mr. Clarke, the clergyman, to ask him to see Mary Dixon off."

"You are determined that she shall come, then?" said Godfrey.

"Yes. Have you any objection? This is what I wanted to ask you. I don't wish to take a new inmate into the house against your wish. I consider it right to consult you in the matter."

"You didn't think so a little while ago, sir," said Godfrey, rather grimly, "when you made up your mind to marry again."

"Ah, that was a different thing. A man's marriage is his own affair," returned his father, hastily. "But if you have any objection to her coming, we can let her understand it is but for a short visit."

"Oh, I have no objection," said Godfrey. "I thought your wife had; that's all."

"What objection can she have?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"Now it seems to me that a little more youth about the place will do us all good. We old people want a little lively society ——"

"I am not very old."

"Neither are you very lively. Why are you answering me in this short, dry manner, Godfrey?"

"I beg your pardon, father; I did not know that I was short and dry. I was only thinking that if Miss Dixon is shy, silent and studious, as you have described her to be, her coming will not enliven any of us: but it does not concern me in any way."

Mr. Mayne, a tall, sparely built man, to whom a mass of dark hair which had turned grey early gave an appearance of dignity that his kind, rather handsome face and fussy manners would not otherwise have possessed, drew himself up to his full height and looked annoyed.

"Yes, it does concern you, Godfrey—it may concern you more than anybody. She is an uncommonly nice girl, and if you should chance to take a fancy to her, or she to you, why ——"

"I see," said Godfrey, hardly knowing whether to feel annoyed, or to laugh.

"Her mother is sufficient recommendation for her: but Mary herself is all that you could wish. And then ——"

"And then we should have both of them in the family," put in Godfrey. "But what would be gained by that, father, when one of them can rule us both?"

"I don't understand you, Godfrey," said Mr. Mayne. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," said his son, waking to the fact that he was going a little too far, "that your wife does what you wish, and makes me do the same."

This rather free translation appeased Mr. Mayne; and his son continued:

"As for marrying Miss Dixon, I don't think a lady who would make a capital wife for a parson would suit me. A man's marriage, as you said yourself, sir, is his own affair, and I think a wife whose chief pleasure lay in district-visiting would go rather over my head."

"Well, well, I have nothing to say about it," said his father, rising, and beginning to fear that he had not conducted the interview with all the delicate diplomacy he had intended to use.

"You have said a great deal too much, you well-meaning, dear old bungler," thought Godfrey, dutifully. "Why are you anxious that I should marry, father? It is quite a new idea."

"Well, you see you are leading so useless a life, as if you had no interest in it; that's what your mother thinks. And, as she says, if you took a nice wife, it would be—be—the making of you."

"To be sure," assented Godfrey. "I will think of it."

He went up to the deserted school-room of the old days, that he now used as his smoking-room, and sat down in the worn American rocking-chair, that Mademoiselle Perrin, their French governess, used to put herself into after she had set them some particularly hard task. Godfrey lit a cigar and fell into reflection.

"So! Mrs. Mayne says it is my father that wishes me to take a wife; *he* says it is my step-mother. He is no diplomatist and he is fussy and fidgetty, but he is the soul of truth, and guileless as a child. She *means* me to do so, and I wonder why. If she decides to marry me to her daughter, I suppose she will accomplish it, even against my own will. I am beginning to be rather afraid of that main de fer, and I think I would not choose my step-mother's exact counterpart to love and to cherish. If Miss Dixon should really turn out to be like her mamma in disposition and in appearance, and if she should then take it into her head to bless me with her hand, there would be nothing for it but flight. Let us hope she will not come, and that my bachelor-ease be not already doomed."

Godfrey rose, and went to the window. The school-room was at that end of the house which joined the Wildings' premises. With his elbows on the window-sill, he leaned out and looked down into the farmyard. Nancy Wilding, the farmer's active daughter, was busy there amid some milk-pails.

"They are in a great hurry to marry me off. By Jove! suppose I took them at their word and made an offer to Nancy!—Nancy!" he called out, laughing.

She was a year or two older than himself, well-grown, well-looking, buxom, with shrewd, twinkling black eyes, and a good-natured face. "Well, Master Godfrey?" she answered, shading her eyes from the sun as she looked up at him.

"I've got orders to take a wife. Will you have me, Nancy?"

"Yes, like a bird, Master Godfrey—when we get a month of Sundays."

"But that is a rude way of answering, Nancy. That is as much as to say, 'never.'"

"And 'never' is just what I mean, Master Godfrey. And it is no ruder than to ask a young woman to have you when you don't want her."

"Why wouldn't you have me, Nancy?"

"Because you are a gentleman, Master Godfrey; and an idle one besides."

"But I am only idle while I've nothing to do. I could work if I pleased—drive the pigs to market."

"Bless you! The pigs would drive themselves better than you'd drive them."

Godfrey acquiesced in this. "How is Jane?" he asked.

"Oh, she's better to-day, sir. She has gone out to walk in the sunshine. Father will take her for a bit of a drive by-and-by."

"It is a pity she should have been laid up just these few days that she is at home, Nancy."

"So it is, Master Godfrey; mother was saying so. Jane has been always subject to these sore throats. She is going to-morrow to stay a day or two with Mrs. Caird at Cheston, and then she goes back to her place."

"Caird, the florist's wife?"

"Yes, sir."

At that moment, Godfrey heard his father's voice calling to him. He opened the door and went along the corridor to the head of the stairs, from whence he could see Mr. Mayne in the hall below, opening the post-bag.

"Where did you get that watch mended, Godfrey?"

"At Goode's, in Rodney Street."

"All right; I'll call there, then. I'm going into Cheston, and I'll just post these two letters for France there; perhaps they'll catch an earlier post than if I left them to go by William to-night."

He took out of the bag his letters to Dinan, and left the house; while Godfrey remained for a few minutes on the landing above with his cigar in his mouth and his back against the wall, debating what he should do with himself till luncheon. He had not yet decided, when he heard a distant door close on the floor below him, and soon after a soft footstep in the hall. Looking down, he saw his step-mother, with a glance round her which did not take in his own figure in the shadow of the corridor above, go up to the hall-table, open the bag, and quickly turn out and examine the letters put in it to be posted. By the eagerness with which she glanced about the table, and once more turned over the letters before putting them with evident disappointment back again, it was clear that she was searching for something she could not find. Then she put the bag exactly as it had been before, and went softly back in the direction of the drawing-room.

Her step-son had watched her proceedings with much interest. When she had disappeared from his sight, he took a few steps forward, and looked down at the post-bag long and reflectively.

"Mrs. Mayne, Mrs. Mayne," thought he to himself, "these are strong measures to take for a very little matter. I admire your pertinacity; I really do; but I don't think it ought to carry you to so questionable a proceeding as interfering with post-bags and tampering with your husband's correspondence."

For he had no doubt that her search had been for the two letters for France; and from the feverish eagerness her usually calm face had shown, and the trembling of her plump white hands, he felt the very strongest suspicions that if she had found those she sought, she would not have contented herself with looking at the outside.

Feeling inwardly perturbed, Mrs. Mayne had stepped out of the drawing-room window to the open air, perhaps that it might cool her, perhaps to see if she could find her husband. Strolling down to the gate, she stood there, looking up and down the road. A comely young woman, neatly dressed in black, who was passing turned her glance on Mrs. Mayne. She was turning it away again, when, with an expression of great surprise, she continued to gaze at the lady's face. Only for a half moment; then she quietly pursued her way.

Mrs. Mayne hurried back to the house, her gait unsteady, her lips white, evidently startled.

"Who was that?" she gasped. "I have seen the face somewhere. She seemed to—to recognise me!"

She and Godfrey had begun luncheon when Mr. Mayne came in. He said he had been to Cheston; and stated, amid other items of news, that he had there posted his two letters for Dinan. Godfrey saw a faint flush rise to his step-mother's cheek. Presently she remarked that she had changed her mind about going out, and that if neither of them wanted the brougham she would order it to be made ready.

"I want to match some wools at Cheston," she explained to her husband, who looked rather surprised at her change of plans.

"Will you allow me to accompany you," said Godfrey, as they rose from table, and the brougham was heard coming round. "I have to get some fresh books."

He began to understand the significant trembling of the white hands: the only sign she gave at the moment that his request was unwelcome. But she could not refuse it. She replied that she should be glad of his society.

"No you won't, madam," thought Godfrey, as he went upstairs to change his coat. "I think I know what you have to do at Cheston, and I must see whether I am right. You have aroused my curiosity as to why you are so extremely anxious to prevent your daughter's coming to the Abbey."

(To be continued.)

ROGER BEVERE.

MR. BRANDON'S SKELETON.

"THERE'S trouble everywhere. It attaches itself more or less to all people as they journey through life. Yes, I quite agree with what you say, Squire: that I, a man at my ease in the world and possessing no close ties of my own, ought to be tolerably exempt from care. But I am not. You have heard of the skeleton in the closet, Johnny Ludlow. Few families are without one. I have mine."

Mr. Brandon nodded to me, as he spoke, over the silver coffee-pot. I had gone to the Tavistock Hotel from Miss Deveen's to breakfast with him and the Squire—who had come up for a week. You have heard of this visit of ours to London before, and there's no need to say more about it here.

The present skeleton in Mr. Brandon's family closet was his nephew, Roger Bevere. The young fellow, now aged twenty-three, had been for some years in London pursuing his medical studies, and giving perpetual trouble to his people in the country. During this present visit Mr. Brandon had been unable to hear of him. Searching here, enquiring there, nothing came of it: Roger seemed to have vanished into air. This morning the post had brought Mr. Brandon a brief note:

"*Sir,—Roger Bevery is lying at No.* 60, *Gibraltar Terrace (Islington District), with a broken arm. Faithfully yours, T. Pitt.*"

The name was spelt Bevery in the note, you observe. Strangers, deceived by the pronunciation, Bev-e-re, were apt to write it so.

"Well, this is nice news!" had been Mr. Brandon's comment upon the short note.

"Anyway, you will be more at your ease now you have found him," remarked the Squire.

"I don't know that, Todhetley. I have found, it seems, the address of the place where he is lying, but I have not found *him*. Roger has been going to the bad this many a day; I expect by this time he must be nearing the journey's end."

"It is only a broken arm that he has, sir," I put in, thinking what a gloomy view he was taking of it all. "That is soon cured."

"Don't you speak so confidently, Johnny Ludlow," reproved Mr. Brandon. "We shall find more the matter with Roger than a broken arm; take my word for that. He has been on the wrong tack this long while. A broken arm would not cause him to hide himself—and that's what he must have been doing."

"Some of those hospital students are a wild lot—as I have heard," said the Squire.

Mr. Brandon nodded in answer. "When Roger came from Hampshire to enter on his studies at St. Bartholomew's, he was as pure-hearted, well-intentioned a young fellow as had ever been trained by an anxious mother"—and Mr. Brandon poured a drop more weak tea out of his own tea-pot to cover his emotion. "Fit for Heaven, one might have thought: anyway, had been put in the road that leads to it. Loose, reckless companions got hold of him, and dragged him down to their evil ways."

Breakfast over, little time was lost in starting to find out Gibraltar Terrace. The cab soon took us to it. Roger had been lying there more than a week. Hastening up that way one evening, on leaving the hospital, to call upon a fellow-student, he was knocked down by a fleet hansom rounding the corner of Gibraltar Terrace. Pitt the doctor happened to be passing at the time, and had him carried into the nearest house: one he had attended patients in before. The landlady, Mrs. Mapping, showed us up stairs.

(And she, poor faded woman, turned out to have been known to the Squire in the days long gone-by, when she was pretty little Dorothy Grape. But I have told her story already, and there's no need to allude to it again.)

Roger lay in bed, in a small back room on the first floor; a mild, fair, pleasant-looking young man with a white bandage round his head. Mr. Pitt explained that the arm was not absolutely broken, but so much contused and inflamed as to be a worse hurt. This would not have kept him in bed, however, but the head had also been damaged, and fever set in.

"So this is where he has lain, hiding, while I have been ransacking London for him!" remarked Mr. Brandon, who was greatly put-out by the whole affair; and perhaps the word "hiding" might have more truth in it than even he suspected.

"When young Scott called last night—a fellow student of your nephew's who comes to see him and bring him changes of clothes from his lodgings—he said you were making enquiries at the hospital and had left your address," explained Pitt. "So I thought I ought to write to you, sir."

"And I am much obliged to you for doing it, and for your care of him also," said Mr. Brandon.

And presently, when Pitt was leaving, he followed him down stairs to Mrs. Mapping's parlour, to ask whether Roger was in danger.

"I do not apprehend any, now that the fever is subsiding," answered Pitt. "I can say almost surely that none will arise if we can only keep him quiet. That has been the difficulty throughout—his restlessness. It is just as though he had something on his mind."

"What should he have on his mind?" retorted Mr. Brandon, in contention. "Except his sins. And I expect *they* don't trouble him much."

Pitt laughed a little. "Well, sir, he is not in any danger at present. But if the fever were to come back again—and increase—why, I can't foresee what the result might be."

"Then I shall send for Lady Bevere."

Pitt opened his eyes. "Lady Bevere!" he repeated. "Who is she?"

"Lady Bevere, sir, is Roger's mother and my sister. I shall write to-day."

Mr. Brandon had an appointment with his lawyers that morning and went out with the Squire to keep it, leaving me with the patient. "And take care you don't let him talk, Johnny," was his parting injunction to me. "Keep him perfectly quiet."

That was all very well, and I did my best to obey orders; but Roger would not be kept quiet. He was for ever sighing and starting; now turning to this side, now to that, and throwing his undamaged arm up like a ball at play.

"Is it pain that makes you so restless?" I asked.

"Pain, no," he groaned. "It's the bother. The pain is nothing now to what it was."

"Bother of what?"

"Oh—altogether. I say, what on earth brought Uncle John to London just now?"

"A matter connected with my property. He is my guardian and trustee, you know." To which answer Bevere only groaned again.

After taking a great jorum of beef-tea, which Mrs. Mapping brought up at midday, he was lying still and tranquil, when there came a loud knock at the street door. Steps clattered up the stairs, and a tall, dark-haired young man put his head into the room.

"Bevere, old fellow, how are you? We've been so sorry to hear of your mishap!"

There was nothing alarming in the words and they were spoken gently; or in the visitor either, for he was good looking; but in a moment Bevere was sitting bolt-upright in bed, gazing out in a fright as though he saw an apparition.

"What the deuce has brought you here, Lightfoot?" he cried, angrily.

"Came to see how you were getting on, friend," was the light and soothing answer, as the stranger drew near the bed. "Head and arm damaged, I hear."

"Who told you where to find me?"

"Scott. At least, he ——"

"Scott's a false knave then! He promised me faithfully not to tell a soul." — And Bevere's inflamed face and passionate voice presented a contrast to his usual mild countenance and gentle tones.

"There's no need to excite yourself," said the tall young man, sitting down on the edge of the bed and taking the patient's hand. "Dick Scott let fall a word unawares—that Pitt was attending you. So I came up to Pitt's just now and got the address out of his surgery-boy."

"Who else heard the chance word?"

"Nobody else. And I'm sure you know that you may trust me. I wanted to ask if I could do anything for you. How frightened you look, old fellow!"

Bevere lay down again, painfully uneasy yet, as was plain to be seen.

"I didn't want anybody to find me out here," he said. "If some—some people came, there might be the dickens to pay. And Uncle John is up now, worse luck! He does not understand London ways, and he is the strictest old guy that ever wore silver shoe-buckles—you should see him on state occasions. Ask Johnny Ludlow there whether he is strait-laced or not; he knows. Johnny, this is Charley Lightfoot: one of us at Bart's."

Charley turned to shake hands, saying he had heard of me. He then set himself to soothe Bevere, assuring him he would not tell anybody where he was lying, or that he had been to see him.

"Don't mind my temper, old friend," whispered Bevere, repentantly, his blue eyes going out to the other's in sad yearning. "I am a bit tried—as you'd admit, if all were known."

Lightfoot departed. By-and-by the Squire and Mr. Brandon returned, and Mrs. Mapping gave us some lunch in her parlour. When the Squire was ready to leave, I ran up to say good-bye to Roger. He gazed at me questioningly, eyes and cheeks glistening with fever. "Is it true?" he whispered.

"Is what true?"

"That Uncle John has written for my mother?"

"Oh yes, that's true."

"Good Heavens!" murmured Bevere.

"Would you not like to see her?"

"It's not that. She's the best mother living. It is—for fear—I didn't *want* to be found out lying here," he broke off, "and it seems that all the world is coming. If it gets to certain ears, I'm done for."

Scarlet and more scarlet grew his cheeks. His pulse must have been running up to about a hundred-and-fifty.

"As sure as you are alive, Roger, you'll bring the fever on again!"

"So much the better I do—save for what I might say in my ravings," he retorted. 'So much the better if it carries me off! There'd be an end to it all, then."

"One might think you had a desperate secret on your conscience," I said to him in my surprise. "Had set a house on fire, or something as good."

"And I have a secret; and it's something far more dreadful than setting a house on fire," he avowed, recklessly, in his distress. "And if it should get to the knowledge of Uncle John and the mother—well, I tell you, Johnny Ludlow, I'd rather die than face the shame."

Was he raving now?—as he had been on the verge of, in the fever,

a day or two ago. No, not by the wildest stretch of the fancy could I think so. That he had fallen into some desperate trouble which must be kept secret, if it could be, was all too evident. I thought of fifty things as I went home and could not fix on one of them as likely. Had he robbed the hospital till?—or forged a cheque upon its house surgeon? The Squire wanted to know why I was so silent.

When I next went to Gibraltar Terrace Lady Bevere was there. Such a nice little woman! Her face was mild, like Roger's, her eyes were blue and kind as his, her tones as genial. As Mary Brandon she had been very pretty, and she was pleasing still.

She had married a lieutenant in the navy, Edmund Bevere. Her people did not like it: navy lieutenants were so poor, they said. He got on better, however, than the Brandons had thought for; got up to be rear-admiral and to be knighted. Then he died; and Lady Bevere was left with a lot of children and not much to bring them up on. I expect it was her brother, Mr. Brandon, who helped to start them all in life. She lived in Hampshire, somewhere near Southsea.

In a day or two, when Roger was better and sat up in blankets in an easy chair, Mr. Brandon and the Squire began about his shortcomings—deeming him well enough now to be tackled. Mr. Brandon demanded where his lodgings were, for their locality seemed to be a mystery; evidently with a view of calling and putting a few personal questions to the landlady; and Roger had to confess that he had had no particular lodgings lately; he had shared Dick Scott's. This took Mr. Brandon aback. No lodgings of his own!—sharing young Scott's! What was the meaning of it? What did he do with all the money allowed him, if he could not pay for rooms of his own? And to the stern questioning Roger only answered that he and Scott liked to be together. Pitt laughed a little to me when he heard of this, saying Bevere was too clever for the old mentors.

"Why! don't you believe he does live with Scott?" I asked.

"Oh, he may do that; it's likely enough," said Pitt. "But medical students, running their fast career in London, are queer subjects, let me tell you, Johnny Ludlow; they don't care to have their private affairs supervised."

"All of them are not queer—as you call it, Pitt."

"No, indeed," he answered, warmly: "or I don't know what would become of the profession. Many of them are worthy, earnest fellows always, steady as old time. Others pull up when they have had their fling, and make good men; and a few go to the bad altogether."

"In which class do you put Roger Bevere?"

Pitt took a minute to answer. "In the second, I hope," he said. "To speak the truth, Bevere somewhat puzzles me. He seems well-intentioned, anxious, and can't have gone so far but he might pull-up if he could. But ——"

"If he could! How do you mean?"

"He has got, I take it, into the toils of a fast, bad set; and he finds

their habits too strong to break through. Anyway without great difficulty."

"Do you think he—drinks?" I questioned, reluctantly.

"No mistake about that," said Pitt. "Not so sharply as some of them do, but more than is good for him."

I'm sure if Roger's pulling-up depended upon his mother, it would have been done. She was so gentle and loving with him; never finding fault, or speaking a harsh word. Night and morning she sat by the bed, holding his hand in hers, and reading the Psalms to him—or a prayer—or a chapter in the Bible. I can see her now, in her soft black gown and simple little white lace cap, under which her hair was smoothly braided.

Whatever doubts some of us might be entertaining of Roger, nothing unpleasant in regard to him transpired. Dreaded enemies did not find him out, or come to besiege the house; though he never quite lost his under-current of uneasiness. He soon began to mend rapidly. Scott visited him every second or third day; he seemed to be fully in his confidence, and they had whisperings together. He was a good-natured, off-hand kind of young man, short and thick-set. I can't say I much cared for him.

The Squire had left London. I remained on with Miss Deveen, and went down to Gibraltar Terrace most days. Lady Bevere was now going home and Mr. Brandon with her. Some trouble had arisen about the lease of her house in Hampshire, which threatened to end in a lawsuit, and she wanted him to see into it. They fixed upon some eligible lodgings for Roger near Russell Square, into which he would move when they left. He was sufficiently well now to go about; and would keep well, Pitt said, if he took care of himself. Lady Bevere held a confidential interview with the landlady, about taking care of her son Roger.

And she gave a last charge to Bevere himself, when taking leave of him the morning of her departure. The cab was at the door to convey her and Mr. Brandon to Waterloo station, and I was there also, having gone betimes to Gibraltar Terrace to see the last of them.

"For my sake, my dear," pleaded Lady Bevere, holding Roger to her, as the tears ran down her cheeks: "you will do your best to keep straight for my sake!"

"I will, I will, mother," he whispered back in agitation, his own eyes wet; "I will keep as straight as I can." But in his voice there lay, to my ear, a ring of hopeless despair. I don't know whether she detected it.

She turned and took my hands. She and Mr. Brandon had already exacted a promise from me that once a week at least, so long as I remained in London, I would write to each of them to give news of Roger's welfare.

"You will be sure not to forget it, Johnny? I am very anxious

about him—his health—and—and all," she added in a lowered voice. "I am always fearing lest I did not do my duty by my boys. Not but that I ever tried to do it; but somehow I feel that perhaps I might have done it better. Altogether I am full of anxiety for Roger."

"I will be sure to write to you regularly as long as I am near him, dear Lady Bevere."

II.

It was on a Tuesday morning that Lady Bevere and Mr. Brandon left London. In the afternoon Roger was installed in his new lodgings by Mr. Pitt, who had undertaken to see him into them. He had the parlour and the bed-chamber behind it. Very nice rooms they were, the locality and street open and airy; and the landlady, Mrs. Long, was a comfortable, motherly woman. Where his old lodgings had been situated, he had never said, even to me: the Squire's opinion was (communicated in confidence to Mr. Brandon), that he had played up "Old Gooseberry" in them, and was afraid to say.

I had meant to go to him on the Wednesday, to see that the bustle of removal had done him no harm; but Miss Deveen wanted me, so I could not. On the Thursday I got a letter from the Squire, telling me to do some business for him at Westminster. It took me the whole of the day: that is, the actual business took about a quarter of an hour, and waiting to see the people (lawyers) took the rest. This brought it, you perceive, to Friday.

On that morning I mounted to the roof of a city omnibus, which set me down not far off the house. Passing the parlour windows to knock at the door, I saw in one of them a card: "Apartments to let." It was odd, I thought, they should put it in a room that was occupied.

"Can I see Mr. Bevere?" I asked of the servant.

"Mr. Bevere's gone, sir."

"Gone where? Not to the hospital?"—For he was not to attempt to go there until the following week.

"He is gone for good, sir," she answered. "He went away in a cab yesterday evening."

Not knowing what to make of this strange news, hardly believing it, I went into the parlour and asked to see the landlady—who came at once. It was quite true: Bevere had left. Mrs. Long, an elderly woman, plump and kindly, sat down to relate the particulars.

"Mr. Bevere went out yesterday morning, sir, after ordering his dinner—a roast fowl—for the same hour as the day before; two o'clock. It was past three, though, before he came in: and when the girl brought the dinner-tray down, she said Mr. Bevere wanted to speak to me. I came up, and then he told me he was unexpectedly obliged to leave—that he might have to go into the country that

night; he didn't yet know. Well, sir, I was a little put out: but what could I say? He paid me what was due and the rent up to the week's end, and began to collect his things together: Sarah saw him cramming them into his new portmanteau when she brought his tea up. And at the close of the evening, between the lights, he had a cab called and went away in it."

"Alone?"

"Quite alone, sir. On the Wednesday afternoon Dr. Pitt came to see him, and that same evening a young man called, who stayed some time; Scott, I think the name was; but nobody at all came yesterday."

"And you do not know where Mr. Bevere is?—where he went to?"

"Why no, sir; he didn't say. The cab might have taken him to one of the railway stations, for all I can tell. I did not ask questions. Of course it is not pleasant for a lodger to leave you in that sudden manner, before he has well been three days in the house," added Mrs. Long, feelingly, "especially with the neighbours staring out on all sides, and I might have asked him for another week's rent in lieu of proper notice; but I couldn't be hard with a well-mannered, pleasant young gentleman like Mr. Bevere—and with his connections, too. I'm sure when her ladyship came here to fix on the rooms, she was that kind and affable with me I shall never forget it,—and talked to me so lovingly about him,—and put half-a-crown into Sarah's hand when she left! No sir, I couldn't be hard upon young Mr. Bevere."

Mrs. Long had told all she knew, and I wished her good day. Where to now? I deliberated, as I stood on the doorstep. This sudden flight looked as though Roger wanted to avoid people. If anybody was in the secret of it, it would be Richard Scott, I thought; and I turned my steps to St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

I suppose I interrupted Scott at some critical performance, for he came to me with his coat cuffs turned up and no wristbands on.

"Glad to see you, I'm sure," cried he; "thought it might be an out-patient. Bevere?—oh, do you want him?" he ran on, not giving himself time to understand me perfectly, or pretending at it. "Bevere is at his new lodgings near Russell Square. He will not be back here until next week."

"But he is not at his new lodgings," I said. "He has left them."

"Left!" cried Scott, staring.

"Left for good, bag and baggage. Gone altogether."

"Gone where?" asked Scott.

"That's what I have come to ask you. I expect you know."

Scott's face presented a puzzle. I wondered whether he was as innocent as he looked.

"Let us understand one another," said he. "Do you tell me that Bevere has left his *new* lodgings?"

"He has. He left them last night. Ran away from them, as one may say."

"Why he had only just got into them! Were the people sharks? I was with him on Wednesday night: he did not complain of anything then."

"He must have left, I fancy, for some private reason of his own. Don't you *know* where he is gone, Scott? You are generally in his confidence."

"Don't know any more than the dead."

To dispute the declaration was not in my power. Scott seemed utterly surprised, and said he should go to Mrs. Long's the first leisure moment he had, to see if any note or message had been left for him. But I had already put that question to the landlady, and she answered that neither note nor message of any kind had been left for anybody. So there we were, nonplussed, Scott standing with his hands in his pockets. Make the best of it we would, it revolved itself into nothing more than this: Bevere had vanished, leaving no clue.

From thence I made my way to Mr. Pitt's little surgery near Gibraltar Terrace. The doctor was alone in it, and stood compounding pills behind the counter.

"Bevere run away!" he exclaimed at my first words. "Why, what's the meaning of that? *I* don't know anything about it. I was going to see him this afternoon."

With my arms on the counter, my head bending towards him, I recounted to Pitt the particulars Mrs. Long had given me, and Scott's denial of having any finger in the pie. The doctor gave his head a twist.

"Says he knows no more than the dead, does he! That may be the case; or it may *not.* Master Richard Scott's assertions go for what they are worth with me where Bevere's concerned: the two are as thick as thieves. I'll find him, if I can.—What do you say?—that Bevere would not conceal himself from me?—Look here, Johnny Ludlow," continued Pitt rapidly, bringing forward his face till it nearly touched mine, and dropping his voice to a low tone, "that young man must have got into some dangerous trouble, and has to hide himself from the light of day."

Leaving Pitt to make his patients' physic, I went out into the world, not knowing whether to seek for Bevere in this quarter or in that. But, unless I found him, how could I carry out my promise of writing to Lady Bevere?

I told Miss Deveen of my dilemma. She could not help me. Nobody could help, that I was able to see. There was nothing for it but to wait until the next week, when Bevere might perhaps make his appearance at the hospital. I dropped a note to Scott, asking him to let me know of it if he did.

But of course the chances were that Bevere would not appear at the hospital: with need to keep his head en cachette, he would be no

more safe there than in Mrs. Long's rooms: and I might have been hunting for him yet, for aught I can tell, but for coming across Charley Lightfoot.

It was on the following Monday. He was turning out of the railway station near Miss Deveen's, his uncle, Dr. Lightfoot, being in practice close by. Telling him of Roger Bevere's flight, which he appeared not to have heard of, I asked if he could form any idea where he was likely to have got to.

"Oh, back to the old neighbourhood that he lived in before his accident, most likely," carelessly surmised Lightfoot, who did not seem to think much of the matter.

"And where is that?"

"A goodish distance from here. It is near the Bell-and-Clapper station on the underground line."

"The Bell-and-Clapper station!"

Lightfoot laughed. "Ironically called so," he said, "from a bell at the new church close by, that's clapping away pretty well all day and all night in the public's ears."

"Not one of our churches?"

"Calls itself so, I believe. I'd not answer for it that its clergy have been licensed by a bishop. Bevere lived somewhere about there; I never was at his place; but you'll easily find it out."

"How? By knocking at people's doors and enquiring for him?"

Lightfoot put on his considering-cap. "If you go to the refreshment-room of the Bell-and-Clapper station and ask his address of the girls there," said he, "I daresay they can give it you. Bevere used to be uncommonly fond of frequenting their company, I believe."

Running down to the train at once I took a ticket for the Bell-and-Clapper station, and soon reached it. It was well named: the bell was clanging away with a loud and furious tongue, enough to drive a sick man mad. What a dreadful infliction for the houses near it!

Behind the counter in the refreshment-room stood two damsels, exchanging amenities with a young man who sat smoking a cigar, his legs stretched out at ease. Before I had time to speak, the sound of an up-train was heard; he drank up the contents of a glass that stood at his elbow, and went swiftly out.

It was a pretty looking place: with coloured decanters on its shelves and an array of sparkling glass. The young women wore neat black gowns, and might have looked neat enough altogether but for their monstrous heads of hair. That of one in particular was a sight to be seen, and must have been copied from some extravagant fashion plate. She was dark and handsome, with a high colour and a loud voice, evidently a strong-minded young woman, perfectly able to take care of herself. The other girl was fair, smaller and slighter, with a somewhat delicate face, and a quiet manner.

"Can you give me the address of Mr. Roger Bevere?" I asked of this younger one.

The girl flushed scarlet, and looked at her companion, who looked back again. It was a curious sort of look, as much—I thought—as to say, what are we to do? Then they both looked at me. But neither spoke.

"I am told that Mr. Bevere often comes here, and that you can give me his address."

"Well, sir—I don't think we can," said the younger one, and her speech was quite proper and modest. "We don't know it, do we, Miss Panken?"

"Perhaps you'll first of all tell me who it was that said we could give it you," cried Miss Panken, in a tone as strong-minded as herself, and as though she were by a very long way my superior in the world.

"It was one of his fellow-students at the hospital."

"Oh—well—I suppose we can give it you," she concluded. "Here, I'll write it down. Lend me your pencil, Mabel: mine has disappeared.—"There," handing me the paper, "if he is not there, we can't tell you where he is."

"Roger Bevary, 22, New Crescent," was what she wrote. I thanked her and went out, encountering two or three young men who rushed in from another train and called individually for refreshment.

New Crescent was soon found, but not Bevere. The elderly woman-servant who answered me said Mr. Bevere formerly lived with them, but left about eighteen months back. He had not left the neighbourhood, she thought, as she sometimes met him in it. She saw him only the past Saturday night when she was out on an errand.

"What, this past Saturday!" I exclaimed. "Are you certain?"

"To be sure I am, sir. He was smoking a pipe and looking in at the shop windows. He saw me and said, Good-night, Ann: he was always very pleasant. I thought he looked ill."

Back I went to the refreshment-room. Those girls knew his address well enough, but for some reason would not give it—perhaps by Bevere's orders. Two young men were there now, sipping their beer, or whatever it was, and exchanging compliments with Miss Panken. I spoke to her civilly.

"Mr. Bevere does not live at New Crescent: he left it eighteen months ago. Did you not know that? I think you can give me his address if you will."

She did not answer me at all. It may be bar-room politeness. Regarding me for a full minute superciliously from my head to my boots, she slowly turned her shoulders the other way, and resumed her talk with the customers.

I spoke then to the other, who was wiping glasses. "It is in Mr. Bevere's own interest that I wish to find him; I wish it very particularly indeed. He lives in this neighbourhood; I have heard that: if you can tell me where, I shall be very much obliged to you."

The girl's face looked confused, timid, full of indecision, as if she knew the address but did not know whether to answer or not. By this

time I had attracted attention, and silence fell on the room. Strong-minded Miss Panken came to the relief of her companion.

"Did you call for a glass of ale?" she asked me, in a tone of incipient mockery.

"Nor for soda?—nor bitters?—nor even cherry-brandy?" she ran on. "No? Then as you don't seem to want anything we supply here, perhaps you'll betake yourself away, young man, and leave space for them that do. Fancy this room being open to promiscous enquirers, and us young ladies being obliged to answer 'em!" added Miss Panken affably to her two friends. "I'd like to see it!"

Having thus put me down and turned her back upon me, I had nothing to wait for, and walked out of the lady's presence. The younger one's eyes followed me with a wistful look. I'm sure she would have given the address had she dared.

After that day, I took to haunt the precincts of the Bell-and-Clapper, believing it to be my only chance of finding Bevere. Scott got a brief note from him, no address to it, stating that he was not yet well enough to resume his duties; and this note Scott forwarded to me. A letter also came to me from Lady Bevere asking what the matter was that I did not write, and whether Roger was worse. How *could* I write, unless I found him?

So, all the leisure time that I could improvise I spent round about the Bell-and-Clapper. Not inside the room, amid its manifold attractions: Circe was a wily woman, remember, and pretty bottles are insidious. That particular Circe, also, Miss Panken, might have objected to my company and ordered me out of it.

Up one road, down another, before this row of houses and that, I hovered for ever like a walking ghost. Now peering in at the oyster shops, and now at the grocers' and bakers', and especially at the perpetually opening door of that bar-room, and at the railway passengers that swung in and out of it. But I never saw Bevere.

Luck favoured me at last. One afternoon towards the end of the week, I was standing opposite the church, watching the half-dozen worshippers straggling into it, for one of its many services, listening to the irritating ding-dong of its clanging bell, and wondering the noise was put up with, when suddenly Richard Scott came running up from the city train. Looking neither to the right nor the left, or he must inevitably have seen me, he made straight for a cross-road, then another, and presently entered one of a row of small houses whose lower rooms were on a level with the ground and the yard or two of square garden that fronted them. "Paradise Place." I followed Scott at a cautious distance.

"Bevere lives there!" quoth I, mentally.

Should I go in at once boldly, and beard him? While deliberating—for somehow it goes against my nature to beard anybody—Scott came striding out and turned off the other way: which led to the shops. I crossed over and went in quietly at the open door.

The parlour, small and shabby as was Mrs. Mapping's in Gibraltar Terrace, was on the left, its door likewise open. Seated at a table, taking his tea, was Roger Bevere; opposite to him, presiding over the ceremonies, sat a lady who must unquestionably have been first-cousin to those damsels at the Bell-and-Clapper, if one might judge by the hair.

"Roger!" I exclaimed. "What a dance you have led us!"

He started up with a scarlet face, his manner strangely confused, his tongue for the moment lost. And then I saw that he was without his coat, and his arm was bandaged.

"I was going to write to you," he said—an excuse invented on the spur of the moment. "I thought to be about before now, but my arm got bad again."

"How was that?"

"Well, I hurt it, and did not pay attention to it. It is properly inflamed now."

I took a seat on the red stuff sofa without being invited, and Bevere dropped into his chair. The lady at the tea-tray had been regarding me with a free, friendly, unabashed gaze. She was a well-grown, attractive young woman, with a saucy face, and bright complexion, fine dark eyes, and full red lips. Her abundant hair was of the peculiar and rare colour that some people call red and others gold. As to her manners, they were as assured as Miss Panken's, but a vast deal pleasanter. I wondered who she was and what she did there.

"So this is Johnny Ludlow that I've heard tell of!" she exclaimed, catching up my name from Bevere, and sending me a gracious nod. "Shall I give you a cup of tea?"

"No, thank you," was my answer, though all the while as thirsty as a fish, for the afternoon was hot.

"Oh, you had better: don't stand on ceremony," she said, laughing. "There's nothing like a good cup of tea when the throat's dry and the weather's baking. Come! make yourself at home."

"Be quiet, Lizzie," struck in Bevere, his tone ringing with annoyance and pain. "Let Mr. Ludlow do as he pleases." And it struck me that he did not want me to take the tea.

Scott came in then, and looked surprised to see me: he had been out to get something for Bevere's arm. I felt by intuition that he had known where Bevere was all along, that his assumption of ignorance was a pretence. He and the young lady seemed to be upon excellent terms, as though they had been acquainted for ages.

The arm looked very bad: worse than it had at Gibraltar Terrace. I stood by when Scott took off the bandages. He touched it here and there.

"I tell you what, Bevere," he said: "you had better let Pitt see to this again. He got it right before; and—I don't much like the look of it."

"Nonsense!" returned Bevere. "I don't want Pitt here."

"I say nonsense to that," rejoined Scott. "Who's Pitt?—he won't hurt you. No good to think you can shut yourself up in a nutshell—with such an arm as this, and—and—" he glanced at me, as if he would say, "and now Ludlow has found you out."

"You can do as much for the arm as Pitt can," said Bevere fractiously.

"Perhaps I could: but I don't mean to try. I tell you, Bevere, I do not like the look of it," repeated Scott. "What's more, I, not being a qualified practitioner yet, would not take the responsibility."

"Well, I will go to Pitt to-morrow if I'm no better and can get my coat on," conceded Bevere. — "Lizzie, where's the other bandage?"

"Oh, I left it in my room," said Lizzie; and she ran up the stairs in search of it.

So she lived there! Was it her home, I wondered; or Bevere's; or their home conjointly? The two might have vowed eternal friendship and set up housekeeping together on a platonic footing. Curious problems do come into fashion in the great cities of this go-ahead age; perhaps that one had.

Scott finished dressing the arm, giving the patient sundry cautions meanwhile; and I got up to leave. Lizzie had stepped outside and was leaning over the little wooden entrance gate, chanting a song to herself and gazing up and down the quiet road.

"What am I to say to your mother?" I said to Bevere in a low tone. "You knew I had to write to her."

"Oh, say I am all right," he answered. "I have written to her myself now, and had two letters from her."

"How do the letters come to you?—Here?"

"Scott gets them from Mrs. Long's. Johnny"—with a sharp pressure of the hand, and a beseeching look from his troubled blue eyes—"be a good fellow and don't talk. *Anywhere.*"

Giving his hand a reassuring shake, and lifting my hat to the lady at the gate as I passed her, I went away, thinking of this complication and of that. In a minute, Scott overtook me.

"I think you knew where he was, all along," I said to him; "that your ignorance was put on."

"Of course it was," answered Scott, as coolly as you please. "What would you?—When a fellow-chum entrusts confidential matters to you and puts you upon your honour, you can't betray him."

"Oh, well, I suppose not. That damsel over there, Scott—is she his sister, or his cousin, or his aunt?"

"You can call her which you like," replied Scott, affably. "Are you very busy this afternoon, Ludlow?"

"I am not busy at all."

"Then I wish you would go to Pitt. I can't spare the time. I've a heap of work on my shoulders to day: it was only the pressing note I got from Bevere about his arm that brought me out of it. He is getting

a bit doubtful himself, you see; and Pitt had better come to it without loss of time."

"Bevere won't thank me for sending Pitt to him. You heard what he said."

"Nonsense as to Bevere's thanks. The arm is worse than he thinks for. In my opinion, he stands a good chance of losing it."

"No!" I exclaimed in dismay. "Lose his arm!"

"Stands a chance of it," repeated Scott. "It will be his own fault. A week yesterday he damaged it again, the evening he came back here, and he has neglected it ever since. You tell Pitt what I say."

"Very well, I will. I suppose the account Bevere gave to his mother and Mr. Brandon—that he had been living lately with you—was all a fable?"

Scott nodded complaisantly, striding along at the pace of a steam-engine. "Just so. He couldn't bring them down upon him here, you know."

I did not exactly know. And thoughts, as the saying runs, are free.

"So he hit upon the fable, as you call it, of saying he had shared my lodgings," continued Scott. "Necessity is a rare incentive to invention."

We had gained the Bell-and-Clapper station as he spoke: two minutes yet before the train for the city would be in. Scott utilised the minutes by dashing to the bar for a glass of ale, chattering with Miss Panken and the other one while he drank it. Then we both took the train; Scott going back to the hospital—where he fulfilled some official duty beyond that of ordinary student—and I to see after Pitt.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

(*To be continued.*)

ISAIAH, CHAP. V., VERSE 4.

IT was a pleasure great to me, my spreading vine to raise,
Gently to bind each tendril bough, throughout the soft spring days;
And when upon the budding grape the summer brightness lay
I thought of all the coming joy on the happy vintage day.

I laid good earth about the roots, and silvery waters shed
From trainèd fountain when the drought o'er all the land was spread;
The pearly rain flew fast and far—till emeralds seemed to glow,
And diamonds sparkled joyfully on every glistening bough.

O friends, what more could I have done to this fair plant of mine?
What more than tend from hour to hour the fondly cherished vine?
And yet—when after patient hope, the pleasant vintage smiled,
'Twas labour lost—love thrown away—behold the grapes were wild!

DORA LYNCH.

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood,
Author of "Through Holland," "The Cruise of the Reserve Squadron," &c.

PLEMONT.

DOWN through the region of the South Coast: between great stretches of wonderful gorse and heather: skirting the edge of the New Forest with its splendid trees and wild wood paths and endless drives upon soft, luxurious turf beneath whispering, glinting leaves: down through portions of Hants, Dorset and Sussex—a goodly portion and a fair out of this dear England of ours: until we reach Southampton.

It was only three o'clock in the afternoon, and the boat for the Channel Islands would not start until the witching hour of midnight. So before "daylight died," we reconnoitred our steamer, the *Ella:* settled our berths with the civil and attentive steward: obtained a satisfactory report of the weather from the amiable captain (when were they ever known to give any other, these optimist rulers of the seas?) and safely deposited on board what the Germans would designate as the grosser part of our luggage.

So far so good.

Then back to the South Western Hotel, where we had put up for those few hours in Southampton. We wandered about the busy but not very interesting streets, admired (not for the first time) the old gateway they call the Bar, with its pointed arch, castellated summit, and general look of age, history and decay; and as a last resource, took the tram which conveyed us we knew not whither, and brought us back we knew not how—except that we seemed units in a multitude. The car was made to hold twenty-four people, and not

less than fifty had thronged in. H. and I were reduced to the extremities of herrings in a barrel. But the rain came down in torrents and no one had the heart to remonstrate. We certainly wondered the horses did not strike, and refuse to work under such conditions; but over and over again the dumb brute creation proves itself more patient, sensible and forbearing than man. These horses knew that, however badly off they might be, there is always a still lower depth, and they acted accordingly. That is just where we often fail. We strike out in the dark, and give the fatal plunge, forgetting the risks and uncertainties of unknown evils.

The car did not break down, but landed us very near the hotel. In the reading-room, very thinly partitioned off from the coffee-room, we took the favourable opportunity, as the schoolboys say, of writing letters to those with whom we had left a large portion of our hearts. Undoubtedly the room was warm; but H.—my familiar friend and fellow traveller—is a Salamander, and though a good Christian is none the less a Fire-worshipper. He revelled in the heated air, whilst I, like a fish out of water, longed for more of one's native element.

Suddenly there entered a tall, majestic, strong-minded and imposing lady. Unceremoniously, and without attempting to find out if it were generally agreeable, she propped wide the door and both windows, placed everyone in a thorough draught, and seated herself midway in the current. It blew a strong blast, cold, damp and dangerous. I sneezed nine times. H. declared he felt every symptom of a severe influenza. A third victim was seized with ague, and called for hot brandy-and-water. Even the strong-minded lady herself finished up with a sneeze and a sudden cough, hailed with a chorus of unmitigated and revengeful delight. At the end of twenty minutes, spent in studying Bradshaw, which was evidently too much for her, she rose up to her utmost height, deliberately closed the windows, and departed with a firm step.

Towards midnight we too departed. Passing through the dock gates we saw an illuminated placard announcing "This way to the Jersey boat." The usual scene was in progress. The bustle and noise of shipping cargo; the shouts of men and the rattling of chains; whilst the few glimmering lights, making darkness yet more visible, confused one's vision and rendered the gangway dangerous and uncertain. We found our way to the bridge. The last train from London steamed up with its small complement of passengers and the mail bags, and on the very stroke of midnight the *Ella* went her way.

We had been warned. It was madness to go to the Channel Islands in October. The crossing was always frightfully rough, often dangerous. Sometimes boats were lost, sometimes they had to put back, sometimes they never left at all. Madeira, the Azores, Sicily, even a voyage to the Cape—anything in short would be more sensible, less insane, than crossing to Jersey in the teeth of the Equinox.

But the longer one lives, the more evident it becomes, that if a man wishes to do anything in the world—though it be only the selfish end and aim of pleasing himself — he must to a very great extent go his own way, and be his own adviser. Somewhat perplexed by a multitude of unsought counsellors, I had written to H., who was ruralising in the Norfolk Broads, for his sentiments in the matter. He very touchingly replied: "So that I am with you, I don't care *where* we go: all places will be equally pleasant and interesting. As to a rough sea, you know that if the ship could safely reach her destination by a series of somersaults, my happiness would be complete."

So, throwing advice to the winds, we decided upon the Channel Islands. They were not far off, we wished to be at home again in a month; and we wanted rest of mind and body quite as much as change of scene.

Without let or hindrance the *Ella* passed out of the docks into the broad, uncrowded waters. The night was now clear and starlit. Lights flashed around from the shipping at anchor, and from the land by which we still seemed surrounded. From the bridge we followed the dark line of the Isle of Wight, and thought it interminable. Who could imagine all the beauties of nature that lay there concealed under the canopy of night? But at last we were clear even of that, and slightly changing our course, the wind blew so keen and cold that we were glad to turn in. For some hours I knew no more. The terrible sea we had been so warned about was smooth as a lake; the passengers in the cabin reached only the mystic number of seven; the night passed in silence and peace.

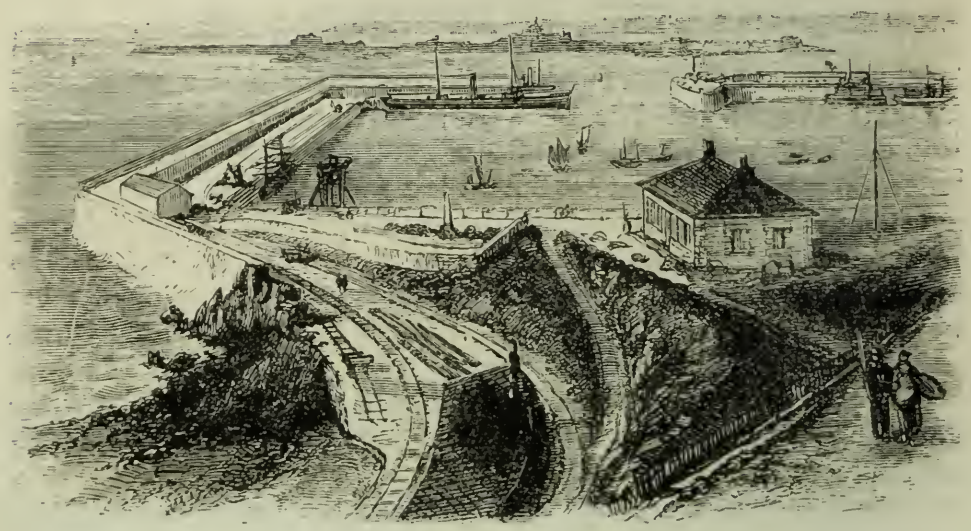
About six o'clock next morning, we were alongside the Caskets, a group of gray granite rocks, bare and bleak, which first announce the approach to the Channel Islands: a dangerous reef, crowned by three lighthouses. Beyond them stretches the Island of Alderney, and all about, sharp rocks rise and bristle out of the water like the pinnacles of unseen temples. It is a dangerous coast, needing care and skill in the navigation thereof.

"In slumbers bound," I saw nothing of the Caskets that first morning. But H.—who seems to set all ordinary laws of nature at defiance, and can live without food or sustenance, or rest in any shape or form—had been up every hour of the night, watching the progress of the constellations and counting the number of the stars. Here the sea began to be somewhat turbulent, and the waves, he said, surged over the rocks and fell back in great showers of spray. In the midst of the storms that sometimes visit these waters, a day spent on the Casket rocks must be a memorable experience.

We approached Guernsey, at which island the boat touches on her way to Jersey. Herm and Jethou, and, beyond them, Sark—that paradise of islands—lay sleeping in the morning sunshine. Between seven and eight o'clock we passed through the Little Russell —a reef of partly-sunken rocks just outside Guernsey, so dangerous that few

vessels venture to approach or leave the island after dark—and entered the fine harbour. Passengers and cargo were landed, and gave place to everything and everyone Jersey-bound. At the last moment a sort of low-backed Irish car, drawn by a mule, came tearing down the pier, with very Irish-looking occupants. A frantic and emotional parting was followed by two out of the group literally tumbling on board, and soon after eight o'clock the vessel was once more on her way to Jersey.

This is often the worst part of the crossing, and was so to-day. The sea was no longer smooth; white tails were all about; a fresh breeze blew from the north-east. But it was at no time unpleasant, though all seemed sufficiently satisfied with their present amount of



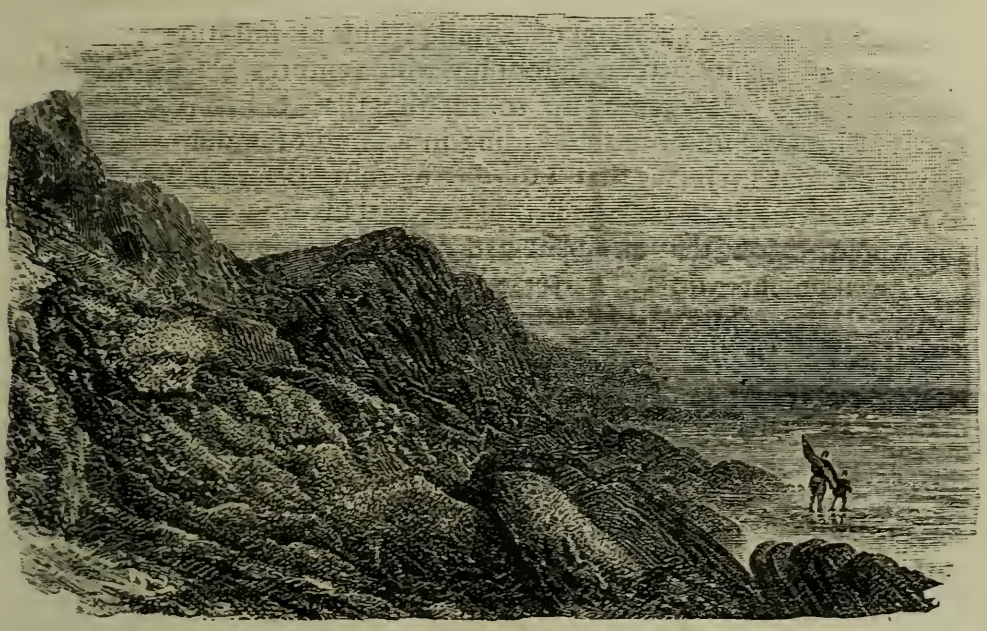
JERSEY HARBOUR.

pitching and tossing—except H. With wind and the waves under his control, we should now have been turning head over heels, and describing circles, and he would have looked on, calm, delighted and indifferent as the crew of the *Flying Dutchman*.

It was all very interesting and enjoyable. Islands rose out of the water on every side. No sooner were we clear of Guernsey, than the influence of Jersey asserted itself. This is the case only on clear days. At other times you lose sight of all land, and might be traversing mid-ocean.

The distance between Guernsey and Jersey from point to point is eighteen miles; but St. Helier is round on the South Coast, and the steamer has another eleven miles to make before reaching that haven. This eleven miles is the best of the journey. We are able to note the rocky shore of Jersey, the slopes and undulations, the points that stretch out seawards and form the bays which perhaps constitute the

chief beauties of the isles. It was especially bright and pleasant that morning. Under the shelter of the land we were in smooth water. The Corbière rocks—a picturesque group of reefs—stood out conspicuously, crowned by a lighthouse. As we rounded the island one feature after another opened up. The warm, sheltered bays slept in the morning sunshine, and the clear green sea splashed upon the shores with long crescents of white foam. The high and rugged rocks of the west gave place to fertile slopes on the south. St. Brelade's Bay—perhaps the prettiest of all the Jersey bays—disclosed a line of houses and a picturesque old church, the oldest church in the islands. Next came St. Aubyn's Bay. The town of St. Helier might be seen rising on the slopes, an apparently confused mass of



Rocks near St. Brelade's.

houses. The harbour stretched out its piers like sheltering arms. In the midst of the waters stood Elizabeth Castle.

The steamer was soon at anchor. The quay was all bustle and excitement. A great crane was straining away and holding up its long neck, preparatory to fishing up all the cargo, animals and luggage, out of the vessel. All down the pier were vehicles of every description, and in numbers sufficient to convey a regiment of soldiers. The season might have been at its height, instead of, happily for us, a record of the past. In front of us, Fort Regent reared its head upon a rock 150 feet above the sea. It is said to have cost the country over a million, and is supposed to be impregnable.

We had heard much of two hotels: the Marine on the Esplanade, and Bree's Stopford Hotel in the town. The former faced the sea, and sounded altogether full of promise, but upon landing, we were told that a travelling circus had encamped under the very shadow of

its walls. Nightly performances enlivened by a brass band, and the applause of appreciative audiences, if not of senates, boded ill for the repose and tranquillity we had not unreasonably hoped to find.

We at once decided upon Bree's Stopford Hotel, and in no way regretted the choice, for it was well-placed, quiet, comfortable, and moderate in its charges. It is undoubtedly the best hotel in Jersey. On the other hand, the "sea view" from the Esplanade is limited. There is the harbour on one side, a point of land stretching out on the other, and in the middle, the garrison of Elizabeth Castle, historically interesting, but not inordinately attractive. At low water the tide goes far out, disclosing a large extent of flat rocks and sea-weed—for the tide here has a fall of between forty and fifty feet. You may walk from the shore to Elizabeth Castle at low water, a distance of three quarters of a mile; but at full tide the castle becomes an island. Woe unto him who ventures across when the tide is rising. It comes up so rapidly that before reaching the garrison he may find himself wading in a flood of water.

We set foot in Jersey that Saturday morning before ten o'clock; an exceptionally quick passage; the one instance, it was said, during the whole season, that any boat had come in to time.

The moment you enter Jersey you receive the impression of a thriving, busy, enterprising town. Everyone appears occupied, and all seem well to do. They have turned all their resources to account, and made the most of the advantages they possess in the way of climate and fertility of soil. One hears of people going to Guernsey and Jersey to economise, but this is a past experience and a present delusion. Everything is as dear as in England; many things are much dearer. We found nothing reasonable except the hotels. Their system, for the most part, is to board you by the day or week, and a good and abundant table is generally kept. This refers only to the best hotels in the Islands: and in the sum total, all over the world, they are the cheapest and most comfortable.

As the flyman went through the town we found many of the streets narrow and irregular. Certainly St. Helier possesses little beauty of its own. I was never in any place so honeycombed with thoroughfares, thrown about, apparently, without the slightest plan or order. H., who professes largely the bump of locality, and was consequently overweeningly self-reliant, was for ever leading one astray, and by what he called short cuts turning a ten minutes' stroll into an hour's walk. At length I found him out; his powers were a sham, his self-reliance a delusion. He knew no more how to steer in this wilderness of streets than a mariner knows how to navigate without a compass. And no wonder. They criss-cross each other like the sections of a puzzle, or the lines in a hand. The town is a labyrinth; and half the time it seemed to us that not even the names were put up for guidance.

Nevertheless, the town has a comfortable, well-to-do air; its people

evidently flourish ; many of the shops are worthy of London or Paris. Inns and hotels abound ; their name is legion ; to us they were countless. How they all thrive and flourish puzzled one exceedingly, and is one of the mysteries of Jersey.

Satisfactorily installed at Bree's Hotel, we strolled into the town for a short inspection. The lesson had still to be learnt that it is scarcely less difficult to steer through Jersey than through the twists and turns, the shoals and pitfalls of life's longer voyage. At last we adopted signs and signals of our own construction. Certain shops, for instance, meant particular bearings, north, south, east or west. According to these, we knew which way to proceed.

Thus, the peculiar name of "Wadge" became our north star as regarded the hotel. The moment it loomed in sight from its pleasant corner (it was a confectioner's, and one of my invariable tasks was a futile endeavour to persuade H. that all pastry was an unwholesome indulgence, leading to the bitter waters of Marah), we knew that three turns to the right, and four to the left, and two again to the right would bring us to our haven. By such means as these, and by no other, we were at length able to pilot about Jersey, and to get rid of that unpleasant sensation of being Babes in the Wood.

Strolling that first morning, by chance we came upon the Market Place. Here, as everywhere, prosperity had set its mark. It is a large, square building, with a dome ninety feet high, and room for over a hundred shops and stalls. The fruit stalls were many and enticing. Magnificent grapes and splendid Jersey pears tempted the weak and yielding. Shall we confess it with confusion? We were unknown ; the market was comparatively deserted ; we invested extensively in some splendid muscats, and disposed of them while wandering from stall to stall. The old fishwives wanted us to buy up all their supplies ; the poultry women, in despair at our obduracy, almost hurled their chickens at our unoffending heads. And I was always the one who had to parry the attacks. H., dark and stern, with his short, torpedo beard, looked the essence of self-will and determination : I, cast in a softer mould, was taken for an easier victim. But appearances are sometimes deceptive.

The women all seemed to speak English and French equally well. Amongst themselves they have a sort of French patois, sufficiently unintelligible to render it an unknown tongue to the ordinary outsider. But they dispense with this when you address them, and reply in a language easily understood. All appeared honest and straightforward ; and if in the last few years their prices have risen from 100 to 500 per cent. according to circumstances, they are only following out the "march of events," treading in the footsteps of the rest of the world. Twenty years ago these islands were primitive; visited by comparatively few people ; the great travelling age had scarcely dawned ; that marvellous creation of modern times, the tourist, was still unfledged. Nous avons changé tout çela, and alas for the change !

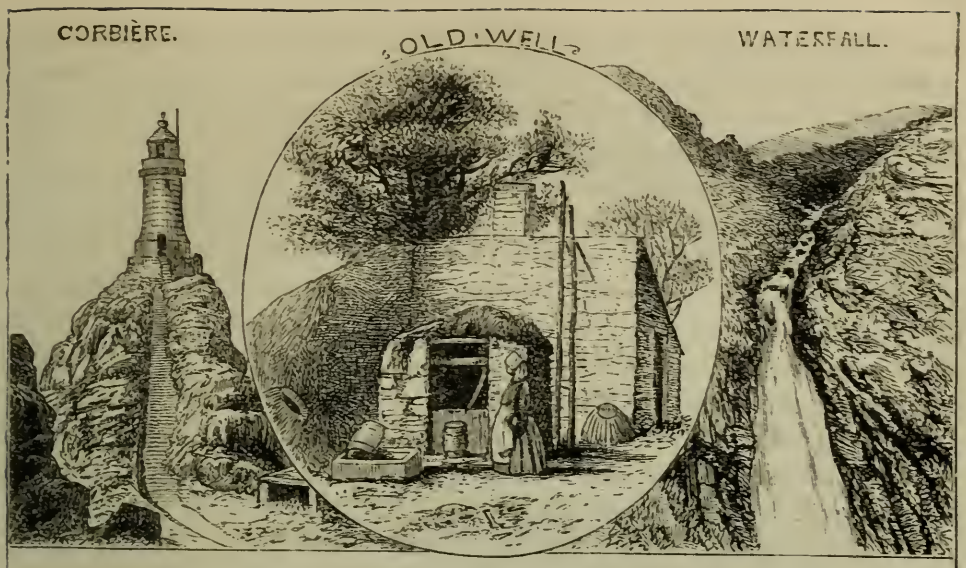
—except for the tourist itself. (One feels that only the neuter gender is here possible.) We may well sing a requiem over the dead past.

We escaped from the market, head and heart whole. The day was unusually fine, and fine days had of late been the exception. The afternoon could not be better employed than by making acquaintance with some portion of the island.

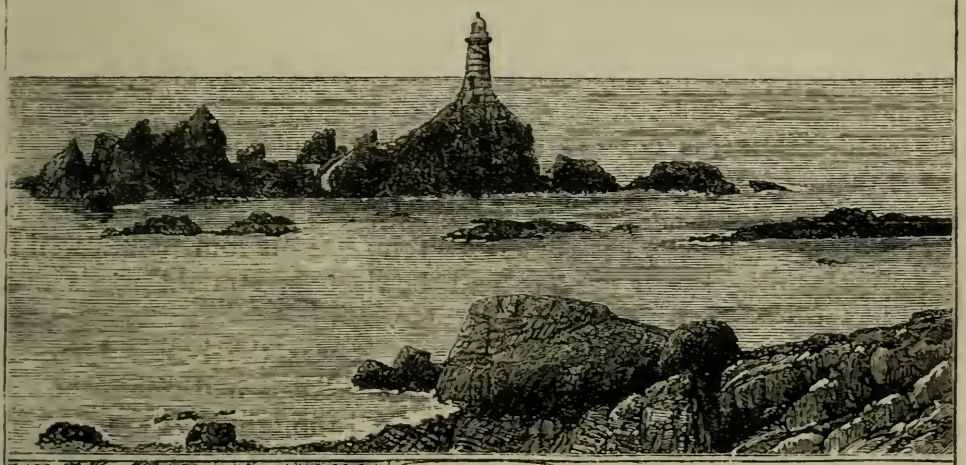
There are two ways of seeing Jersey, as regards driving. Either by hiring a private carriage, or by taking a seat on one of the numerous "cars" that in three days manage to show you all that is worthy of note. This is obtaining a species of bird's eye view of the island, and is a very different matter from exploring every inch on foot, and by long familiarity learning to love and to know the bays with their curves and crescents; the sea that surges up and dashes against the rocks and headlands; the small valleys and ravines that are scattered about. For, after all, the Channel Isles are not to be easily known and appreciated like lands of high mountains, and vast precipices, and huge cataracts, and endless forests. These take the heart and mind by storm, and from the first moment establish an unfading impression. The Channel Islands win their way into the affections by slower degrees.

The cars are somewhat originally constructed. The places are all "outsides," for there is no interior; no shelter from the rain or refuge from the stormy blast. Thus fine weather is de rigueur. But their possessing no "inside" is a feature in their favour. You are perched at a considerable elevation, and thus command the country as you drive through it. The hedges are sometimes high, but you are yet higher than they. On the other hand, the trees being frequently low, you often find yourself on a level with, or commanding, the topmost branches. The only objects that sometimes have you at a disadvantage are the cabbage-stalks. These extraordinary productions occasionally grow to the height of fifteen feet, and a six-foot cabbage-stalk is a common occurrence. They might be called the palm trees of Jersey, though certainly without possessing any beauty of their own. Imagine a long, yellowish stalk shooting out of the ground, with notches at intervals resembling the vertebræ of some huge extinct animal, and at the end—the cabbage. In this thrifty land the stalks become an article of commerce. They are manufactured into walking-sticks, and the shop windows display them in variety and abundance. If curiosities and mementoes should be ungainly, many of these stalks perfectly fulfil their destiny. One, twelve feet long, twelve inches in circumference, gorgeously mounted in silver, and varnished to the hue of ebony was H.'s special ambition. He did his utmost to tempt the possessor to part with it, but in vain.

"It is worth more to me, sir, than any sum you could give," said the unflinching shopkeeper. "It brings me innumerable customers; one thing leads to another; and, in short, I attribute all my prosperity to the possession of that cabbage-stalk. My Lord Shuffleshoes was



CORBIERE ROCKS.



over here in August, in his yacht *Skyscraper*, and offered me £20 for it and a cruise round the Island, and I replied: 'No, your worship, it's not for sale; and I don't think I would exchange it for the Koh-i-noor of her most Gracious Majesty the Queen.'"

H. gave up any further attempt to buy the stalk, and turned to a bundle of ordinary dimensions. Choosing out the two ugliest and thickest to be found, he insisted upon my accepting one in memory of Jersey. With these two disreputable, awful, and Irish-looking implements of war added to our impedimenta—now become so in very deed—we were compelled to travel about the Islands, and finally through some parts of Normandy, merely to satisfy the idiosyncrasy of a being afflicted with a cabbage-stalk mania. I have since heard that it attacks everyone who visits the Channel Islands, and is popularly known as the "Jersey Fever."

To return to the cars. The delighted tourist mounts to his seat by means of a ladder. There are four or five rows of benches one behind another, all facing one way—straight ahead. On each side the driver there is room for two passengers, and these seats are so much the best and pleasantest they might well command a premium. The car has also a conductor, who points out whatever is worth seeing on the road, pilots his charges about at the numerous halting places, takes them upon high rocks and down into deep caves, and makes himself generally useful. Thus these cars, like Cook's Tours, may be said to be "personally conducted." Jehu has his four horses well in hand, and turns sharp corners and bowls over straight roads at a speed at once exhilarating and agreeable.

This is one way of seeing Jersey. It was the best way, most certainly, in this month of October, when the cars had diminished in number until there was only one left to tell the tale, and the passengers were few and quiet. In full season, the time of many cars and tourists, no doubt it is quite another matter.

For ourselves, having attempted both ways, we have a right to give an opinion. On the Saturday afternoon we hired a carriage, on the Monday we patronised the car, and from every point of view the latter was the greater success. We went much faster through the air and we saw a great deal more. We had the carriage for three hours, the car for nearly seven. The charge for the one was nine shillings; the car, for each passenger, exacts the moderate fare of half a crown: and it is as well appointed as a London stage coach.

We started, then, that Saturday afternoon, for Mont Orgeuil Castle, the most important sight of its kind in the island. On our way we passed the Market Place, and I blush to say at the entreaties and even menaces of H. (I remembered the awful cabbage-stalks he had bought that morning) we laid in a further supply of muscats of Alexandria, to be disposed of in the broad, lonely, open country.

Uphill for a time and bearing to the right, we soon found ourselves without the town, on the coast road. Here runs one of the short

Jersey railways. To our right-hand the sea lay stretched in calm, shimmering beauty. The exquisite colour and clearness of the water, most liquid blue, most transparent aqua-marine, with here and there long stripes of purple, drew wonderful adjectives and expressions from H., who had never seen it equalled. In truth it was very lovely. It was nearly low water and great boulders and flat rocks, and patches of sand were covered with their abundance of sea-weed. Beyond, rising out of the water, were innumerable small rocks, jagged and pointed, their many shapes and sizes adding much to the beauty of the coast. Many of these are covered at high tide, and one realised the danger of boating here without a skilful pilot at the helm.

The railway ran between us and the sea, and when the short train passed within a yard or two we rather hoped our steady-going horse would take fright and break into a mild gallop, behold we were disappointed. He merely pricked up his ears and shook his mane and went on more leisurely than ever. The road was diversified by wayside houses and small villages. The houses most of them bore names suggestive of an earthly paradise, very pleasing to the fancy and a lively imagination. Val Plaisant, Mon Désir, Mon Orgeuil, Mon Trésor, Mon Plaisir, Belle Vue, Beau Désert, Beau Rivage—with such names as these the inhabitants try to impress upon themselves, and each other, and the world at large, that here reigns all that is beautiful and bright. Perhaps they do well. Contentment is the secret of happiness, and in these calm and placid abodes it appeared to be the keynote of life. Many of the names both of people and places are French, and their pronunciation having been partly anglicised you only catch the proper twists and turns and shades of expression after long familiarity. The result is always perplexing, and seldom satisfactory.

The villages were not infrequent. One was named Pontac, and immediately carried us away in the spirit to South Africa, and to a well-loved friend, who, once undertaking a commission to send home some rich and ripe Constantia, improved the occasion by despatching instead twenty dozen of Cape port—or Pontac—and Cape sherry, which no one would ever condescend to touch, or even to receive as a gift; it therefore remained, and remains, a white elephant. Another village was named Old Five Oaks, after five trees, pointed out by the driver with, it must be confessed, a somewhat shame-faced expression; for they were about the size and substance of small firs. But trees are not the strong point of Jersey. They are diminutive, though often making up in beauty and eccentricity of form for deficiency in size. Here and there you come across a picturesque lane. The trees meet and arch overhead, and intertwine their branches so cunningly and regularly, with so much apparent method, that you might fancy they had been specially trained. The roads are for the most part bordered by hedges only, and thus these occasional lanes form a special and pleasant break in the marked features of the island.

Mont Orgueil was to be the limit of our drive: a fine old castle perched upon a hill overhanging the sea. From a distance it appears to rise out of the water, and looks what it really is, noble and imposing, venerable and somewhat ruinous. But the castle itself is in perfect condition; the ruins belong to a detached portion. It is also called Gouray or Gorey Castle, from the village it seems to guard with jealous eye.

Mont Orgueil is intimately connected with the history of the island. It is said to date back to the time of the Romans, and the detached and picturesque ruin alluded to is called Cæsar's Fort. It has been subjected to repeated attacks from the French, and was taken by them in the 15th century; soon, however, to pass again out of their hands.

MONT ORGUEIL CASTLE.

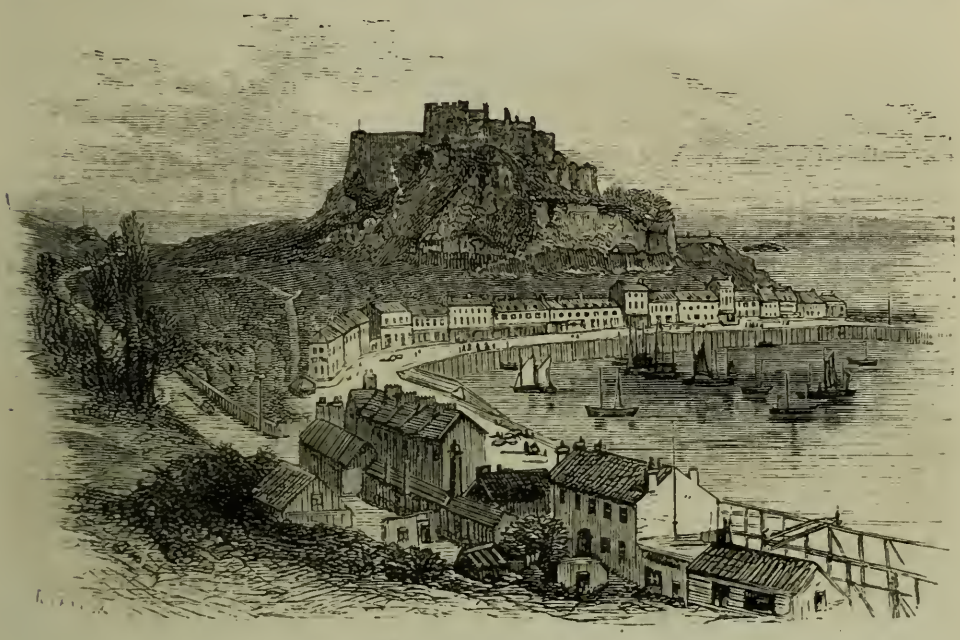
The years and the centuries rolled on, and Mont Orgueil went through the phases and vicissitudes time inevitably brings in its train. Its walls now resisted sieges, now held captives in its melancholy rooms and dungeons, now passed through romantic episodes, now enjoyed an interval of repose. In 1645 the first Protestant Dean of Jersey and his son were here imprisoned, and lost their lives in attempting to escape. Charles II. is said to have found refuge here, and Queen Victoria visited it with Prince Albert in 1846. The world in the 19th century is no longer what it was in the 15th, and nothing now disturbs the solemn silence and dustladen rooms of this venerable stronghold more formidable than the visit of two quiet travellers, or the less sedate onrush of a Midsummer excursion.

Approaching, the castle looked impregnable, and commanded the sea. Its hoary head crowned the green slopes of the hill on which it stands. The village below reposed in security, and looked more

French, perhaps, than any other part of the island. A small harbour, with a short stone pier, gave shelter to a number of fishing boats, now, at low water, high and dry upon the mud. A small government steamer, connected with the fisheries, alongside the pier, looked a very pretty object, in the pink of order, though bearing the reputation of being very useless at sea.

Through the quiet village which looked sleepy and lifeless, the carriage turned into the narrow road to the entrance. It could go no farther.

The castle, with its gray, massive, hoary walls, here and there ivy-grown, stood before us, an imposing structure. Through the small windows that seemed to gaze at us like eyes in the walls, many



MONT ORGUEIL.

a sad face must have been seen peering seaward, in vain longing for a freedom that never came. We climbed the steep and rugged path into the precincts of the castle; through an open doorway, where any door had long ceased to be, through yet another, until one barred and bolted stopped our progress. Here we should have been at fault, but the custodian appeared, struggling up in our wake, an open sesame in his hand in the form of a bunch of keys, possession of which would have been worth a king's ransom to many a captive in days gone by: would have meant the difference between life and death.

The interior is now bare and empty. Imagination conjures up a vivid contrast between this deathlike silence and the animation, the clash of swords, the martial scenes that reigned there when first the castle was called Mont Orgueil. Ichabod is now its motto; its glory has departed; but with it, happily so have all scenes of terror and

torture, cruelty and bloodshed. The walls are amazingly thick, and may stand as long as the world lasts. The rooms are interesting by virtue of their antiquity, the scenes they have witnessed, the prisoners they have confined. Du Gueslin, the Duc de Bourbon, the Duke of Clarence, brother of Henry V., who gave the castle its present proud title, Sir Walter Raleigh, the great Elizabeth, Charles II., Prynne the Puritan poet, Bandinel the first Protestant Dean of Jersey, all have in turn found shelter within the fortress.

The custodian pointed out the room where Bandinel was confined, and one shuddered on looking down into the rocky depths the unfortunate Dean vainly attempted to defy. From the tower the view was very splendid. The bright green sea, sleeping and shimmering in the October sunshine, stretched far and wide. It might have been a June afternoon. The sloping rocks below Cæsar's Fort were a colossal monument of rugged beauty and grandeur. In stormy weather the sea dashes at their base with terrific force, covering the very walls of the ruin with foam. Yet many an unlucky prisoner must have envied the sea its wild freedom, as he watched the waves roll in and break with a sound of thunder, and almost longed to risk his life amongst them.

Beyond the sea lay the cliffs of France, looking, this afternoon, very near and distinct, suggestive of the pleasant life that may be spent amidst that frivolous but charming people. At our feet lay the snug village and harbour of Gorey; once, more busy and important than now, when the oyster-beds brought forth abundantly, and the people drove a brisk trade. Grouville Bay swept round in a long crescent curve, ending in La Rocque Point. Martello towers are visible at intervals all round the coast; but in these days of comparative peace, they have been turned into store-houses and dwellings; and for £1 a year a family may inhabit one of these round towers, kings and queens, to all intents and purposes, of their own castle.

The railway stretched parallel with the shore, and at this moment a line of white steam puffed out from the engine, as the train left Les Marais station. We watched its progress up to Gorey terminus. No one got out, and no one got in. The station-master rang the bell as if he would awake the dead, but only a dog barked in response. Away went the train again, back towards St. Helier, with its three empty carriages. Houses and settlements enlivened the shores of Grouville Bay, and the waters were broken by that multitude of small rocks. The "creeping, crawling tide"—here no inapt description—still far out, left bare those long stretches of sea-weed, so largely used here to fertilise the earth. The land rose in steep and cultivated heights, and the driver, in returning, abandoned the coast road, and toiled upwards into the country, to a very perfect and wonderfully interesting Druids' temple.

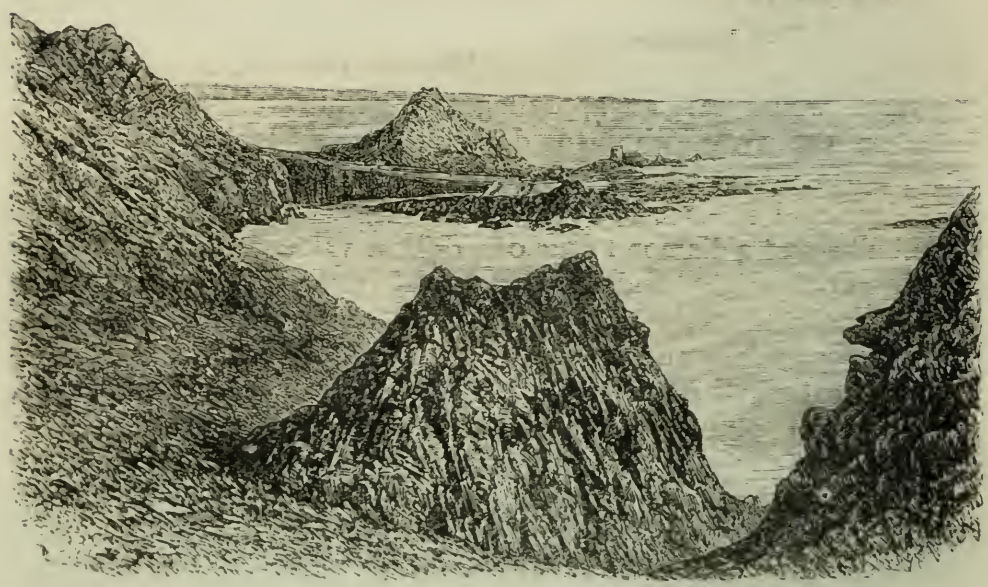
Here we stayed some time absorbed by its influence. Then we went on, now sweeping over the top of a hill, now descending to

the level of the sea, now passing through a hedge-bound, Jersey lane. And always the roads were in wonderfully good order and the hedges perfection. But we were generally below the latter, and this was tantalising and unsatisfactory. Every now and then we came across a great apple orchard, one of the chief features of the island. Never were seen trees so laden with fruit; apples from the pale yellow to the deep red. Many—like the Jersey pears—are sent to England; and many are manufactured into cider. When, at last, we reached St. Helier, twilight was gathering, and a chilly wind was creeping up over the sea, and we were not sorry to get back to our comfortable quarters.

The company at the table d'hôte that night—the dinner was excellent—was amusing. Opposite to us sat an evidently newly-married couple, who had entered well on the meridian of life. Nevertheless, the lady blushed and simpered in a very charming and girlish fashion whenever her left-hand neighbour addressed her. After an inaudible reply she would cast an appealing and gushing glance at her husband on the right, who, to do him justice, looked a sensible Englishman. The old bachelor on the left—he was unmistakably a bachelor—had a smooth, round, red face, a flaxen wig that curled beautifully, and a diamond ring of priceless value. He watched the happiness of his right-hand neighbours, and seemed to feel it a reproach to his single blessedness. Beyond him came a Darby and Joan, whose halcyon days were in the long ago. They could only be described as extremely comfortable. The gentleman was big and broad, and if it were polite, the lady might be described in similar terms. It was pleasant to see the evidently good understanding existing between this couple, who, judging from their age, might long have passed their silver wedding. They were on the best of terms with life and the world, and all the good things it possesses for the fortunate and the prosperous. The gentleman reminded one so much of a public character who in the last few years has become notorious, that we were at no fault for a title whereby to identify him. From his expression we felt that he must be a Radical, and later we found that our instincts had not been led astray. His cara sposa evidently appreciated the pleasures of the table. No dish passed her, and it was a true delight to hear her smack her lips after an especially happy effort on the part of the hotel chef. Once, after disposing of a large helping of a sweet dish, she turned to her lord and exclaimed, pro bono: "Very good, my dear; uncommonly good! Waiter, bring me some more of that stuff!" And a second supply quickly went the way of the first, and the lady looked a third time longingly at the dish, at that moment retreating, in the hands of a provident and active waiter, through the door leading to unseen regions.

It was a singular fact that we were constantly coming across a happy bride and bridegroom in our progress through the Channel Islands. To-night there were no less than three sets at table, living

for the moment in a fool's paradise, deluded souls dreaming of heaven. Next to the elderly comfortable couple came another newly-married pair, who in the public drawing-room mistook their honeymoon for their days of courtship, and made love to each other in a manner that not even the twilight could conceal or the shades of night excuse. Opposite them sat a French lady and gentleman, who, like many of their countrymen, began their breakfast every morning with bottled beer. It might truly be said that their presence filled the room. Another remarkable personage was a specimen who puzzled us not a little. One thing appeared certain; either he had been insane or he was about to become so. He was generally known by the sobriquet of the Bear. The title was well applied. His manners were an apo-



L'Etac.

logy for the word. His frown would have terrified Medusa. The waiters trembled at his tones. We speculated as to what he had been, or was, or would become, finally deciding that he must be a very rough specimen of a Cape diamond seeker, or an Australian bush-ranger. And I do not think we were far wrong.

Every night during our stay in Jersey did this curious and mixed assemblage afford us infinite entertainment. It was a study of human nature under varied forms. The comic element prevailed; comical, at least, to us; but the grotesque was there also, the sentimental, and, perhaps, the ridiculous. Yet the traits of each particular set were so marked and startling, that the commonplace was quite absent.

I think we looked forward to that one hour of the twenty-four with as much interest as we did to any other. It was a change and contrast after a day spent amidst the beauties of nature: the crescent bays, where plashed and murmured all that exquisite sea, with its

transparent colours and clear depths; all the grand rocks that make Jersey a place of beauty and of interest. It was also the only hour out of the twenty-four that we came into close contact with the representatives of the English abroad—that experience which grows year by year more startling and miraculous from a specimen point of view. For the rest of the time we were so uninterrupted in our haunts and rambles as to feel happy and fortunate in having chosen this quiet, calm October, for making acquaintance with the Channel Islands.

Sunday, for one of us, was a dies non, spent in retirement and the miseries of headache. Monday, the one solitary car was announced for its day's excursion. It looked—under the circumstances of October—quiet and inviting. We secured two seats to the right of the driver, and for the first time in our lives mounted a Jersey car.

St. Peter's Valley.

Perched on a level with first-floor windows, we dashed through the town. The weather was such as we dream of in Paradise, but very very rarely find on earth. The sky was blue and unclouded; the atmosphere was radiant and exhilarating. If we lost a little in dignity as compared with our Saturday's vehicle, we gained infinitely in pleasure, profit, and health.

For three days we thus drove about and saw Jersey: three days never to be forgotten. We never had three such days afterwards; even when the sky was unclouded, that peculiarly radiant atmosphere was no more. For the time we were in Eden, and then we came back to the world. In this manner we grew to know, almost to love the island. But space fails, and the experiences of those three days must be left to another Paper.

THE BLACK BUOY.

By Arthur W. Ready.

"SWIM?" said my grandmother, as we sat around the crackling logs one Christmas Eve. "Every boy and girl should learn to swim. I could swim like a duck when I was a girl, and there came a time when it served me in good stead!"

My grandmother sat bolt upright in her high-backed chair, resting her elbows on the arms, and smiled across at the General, who sat on the other side of the hearth. There was a conscious look in her bright old eyes. My grandfather, pausing in the act of raising his tumbler to his lips, nodded and smiled back again. They were both white-haired, bright-eyed, and fresh-coloured: each saw the other through an effacing medium, which smoothed out wrinkles, restored hyacinthine locks, and blotted out the fifty years that lay between them and youth.

We, the diverse-aged descendants of this stately pair, were grouped in lazy attitudes around the vast, roaring hearth, with its tall, carved chimney-piece; and as we saw the meaning looks that were exchanged between our respected progenitors, we scented a story.

My grandmother hesitated for a moment at our many-voiced appeal, and shook her head; then looked across at the General, who nodded again; and after a little pressing, thus began:

"You know, young people, that you are of good family only on your grandfather's side, and not on mine: for he came of an old and honourable stock, whilst my father was only the master of a vessel that traded between England and the West Indies. He was killed in a sea-fight when I was a child; and I was brought up by my grandfather, who, ostensibly a boat-builder and fisherman, was in reality a smuggler. In those days smuggling meant great risks and enormous profits. It was not only a profitable trade, but it was reputable in a peculiar sort of way. It required great skill and courage. England was always at war in those days, and the smuggler had to run the risk of being snapped up by an enemy's cruiser as well as the chance of falling into the clutches of a revenue cutter. In addition there were the inevitable risks of the sea.

"Thus a smuggler must possess a knowledge of navigation. He had to work into harbour on the darkest nights with the utmost secrecy and despatch. To do that, he must know every inch of his way; be able to distinguish landmarks and buoys in what would seem to the uninitiated to be blank darkness; and to know to a nicety at what times the tide turned, the twists of sandbanks, and the position of sunken rocks.

"There was only one channel leading into the harbour, for the mouth of our little river was choked with sand, and the banks extended out to sea. It was necessary to hit this channel some distance out at sea, and a small black buoy bobbed up and down to indicate its commencement. One side of the harbour was formed by a line of rocks shelving down gradually into the water, and the buoy was distant from the extremity of these rocks about three-quarters of a mile, or a little more. This headland was called the Point.

"The black buoy, a mere speck on the waters, was hard enough for anyone to find in the broad day, but my grandfather never failed to find it in the dark—for, of course, it was only on a moonless night that the smugglers dared to run a cargo. The usual course of proceeding was this: the lugger arrived off our coast at nightfall, lay-to until a signal was flashed from our friends on shore, flashed a reply, found the entrance to the channel, and worked in with the tide.

"I had a very independent kind of life, getting a good deal of book-learning from the old vicar, and passing many hours in the bright sunshine and the free fresh air. I could run a couple of miles, and pull an oar, and swim with the best. The sea had no terrors or difficulties for me, except such as it was a pleasure to overcome. So at sixteen I was a fresh-coloured, free-limbed, and I believe, bright-eyed young maiden, whose only trouble was her long tresses of thick brown hair, and who thought very little of the outside world.

"On a certain day in September, my grandfather being absent and expected back at night, I set off for a long ramble in the country, taking some sandwiches with me for dinner. At nightfall I was returning tired and hungry, when I paused on the cliffs for a moment to take a last look around before striking into the path that led to the village. With a sigh of contented fatigue, I turned homewards, when I recollected that a little suit of blue serge, which I used for bathing, required some trifling repairs. I kept it in a little cave not far from the gully up which our contraband goods used to be conveyed; so without approaching the village, I hastened to the cave by the shortest route. I passed down the gully, slipped into the cave, and felt about for my dress. Having found it, I was just about to come out again, when a strange sound broke the stillness of the night, and I stopped short. Apparently coming from the gully I heard the tramp of feet and the noise of voices, and a queer, little thin sound, but curiously distinct—the clink of steel.

"I peered out cautiously. Two men emerged from the gully. They had long cloaks on, but, by the clank of their arms and the manner of their bearing, I knew them to be soldiers. They were talking in low voices; but I could hear what they said, for the night was very still.

"'This is the place, sir,' said one, who seemed to be the elder. 'The goods are landed here, and carried up this gully. The carts stand at the head of the gully, where we came down.'

"The other, the careless ease of whose bearing, coupled with the deferential manner of his companion, showed him to be an officer, had a paper in his hand. He looked around him, up and down the little ravine, evidently taking in the features of the place.

"'Very well,' said he, speaking in a full, low tone that I well remember. 'I shall post half the men here, and place the rest at intervals between this and the village to stop anyone who attempts to pass. At a quarter past eight the tide turned. At twelve the signal. You undertake the signal, don't you?'

"The sergeant produced a lantern from under his cloak.

"'Here is the signal, sir.'

"'Then order the men down, and place the others as you think best.'

"The sergeant saluted, and clanked up the gully. The officer walked slowly towards the water and stood there at the edge—some distance from me, for the tide was low—with his head bowed and his hands behind his back. Now or never for me to get away. Quick as thought, I slipped out of my hiding-place and hastened up the gully. Horror! at the head of it was a string of dark figures winding methodically down, their heads every now and then bobbing up and down against the twilight sky. The rocks were steep, but not high, and I was half-way up them in an instant. Behind a sheltering ledge I crouched, scarcely daring to breathe, while they marched, tramp, tramp, silently down the ravine.

"They passed out of sight. I heard an order given in a sharp, clear tone, the rattle of arms, and all was still. Then I breathed again. I looked to the head of the gully, and there, athwart the sky, appeared at intervals a black figure. A sentinel was posted there.

"Up to this moment I had only thought of escaping and arousing some of our friends in the village. It would be hard if we could not devise some means of warning the lugger of her danger. Now that hope was gone, for my return to the village was cut off. Still everyone must know what was going on, and would not someone slip out a boat? How could they? The tide was low; the only channel even for a small boat was close to the lower end of the gully, and the soldiers could prevent anyone passing out.

"I covered my face with my hands, and busied myself to think. There could be no reasonable doubt why the soldiers had been brought, twenty miles at least, to our little village. Penal servitude for life! What did that mean? It was no uncommon punishment, I had heard, for a smuggler taken, as my grandfather would surely be, red-handed. For a moment the hope flashed into my head that he might not come to-night. But no! The wind was light and not unfavourable, there was no suggestion of a fortunate storm in the sky, and I knew that the people with the carts had arranged to come, and that all was in readiness. My heart sank within me.

"Suddenly I raised my head and formed a bold resolve. I would

save him. Yes, I! The skill which I had attained for my own heedless pleasure should be put to stern service. I determined that when the lugger showed her signal in answer to that treacherous one from the shore, I would swim out to the buoy and keep myself afloat at the entrance of the channel until I could hail our people and warn them of their danger.

"I never hesitated after I had formed this resolution. I forgot that I was hungry and tired, and began instantly to make my preparations. On the narrow ledge of rock where I now knelt, I undressed and put on my little bathing costume, which consisted only of a tunic and drawers. I made my clothes into a bundle, and stowed them away in a cleft. Then, like a cat, I clambered up the rocks, hiding behind every projection, and keeping a fearful watch upon the sentinel at the head of the gully.

"Fortunately the gully was not very deep. When I reached the top I crept on my hands and feet until I judged I was well out of sight, and started for the end of the Point. I took my time, for the moment of action was long enough distant, and I had to husband my strength. At last I reached the rock from which I meant to dart, and sat down to wait for the lugger's signal.

"I did not know the time, and could only guess it by calculating from the sunset. How long should I have to wait? How long did I wait? Heaven knows, but it seemed an age. I got sleepy from my day's exertions. The night air was cold, too; and my clothing, admirably adapted for exercise, was somewhat scanty for sitting still. Besides, it was damp. The wretchedness of that long watch comes before me now. And, oh! would the slow minutes never pass?

"I waited so long that I believed I must have fallen asleep and missed the signal, and I was on the brink of burying my face in my hands and giving way to despair, when I checked myself — and flash! far out on the dark sea, there it was! I sprang to my feet, every nerve tingling. The moment for action had arrived.

"I paused a moment to take the bearings of the buoy. I knew exactly how it lay from the Point, for I had swam round it often enough. But not in the dark. Not with the water a vast, heaving, black plain, mingling with the black sky.

"But I never hesitated. In I went, and after a few strokes, the sense of vigorous exercise, exultation in physical power and skill, overcame my misgivings. On I went, struggling hard to keep my wits about me, in spite of the horror that would rush over my brain now and again. It was hard work, too, for the tide was coming in, there were breakers in the shallows, and in the channel the tide ran fast and strong. Once I all but gave up. I got out of the channel among the breakers; and the buffeting and banging bewildered me, so that I fell into a sort of panic. I threw myself on my back, and in the very act, thanks to my practised eyesight, I caught sight of the buoy. There it was, bobbing up and down, like a silly black cork.

"I swam up to it and kept close by. It was like a friend in all this wild desolation of heaving seas. But now came the worst watch of the whole. The lugger must pass within hail of me, but what if my strength gave out? For it was ebbing fast. I had been without food for hours. I had walked many miles, and swimming is a most exacting exercise. Still I was not going to give up at the last pinch, and I had my reward.

"A little gleam of parting waves, a black mass coming on, towering blacker than the darkness, and I hailed them. '*White Swan*, ahoy!'

"A voice came from the darkness, '*White Swan* it is; who are you?'

"'Lay-to, and throw a rope over your starboard quarter.'

"The lugger was only about thirty yards distant. I made my last effort and swam to her. A rope was thrown, and they hauled me on board, and I had just time to give my warning before I fell fainting on the deck.

"When I came to myself, the last keg of our cargo was being lowered overboard. We were some little distance up the coast and floats were attached to the kegs so that we might be able to find them again.

"So expeditiously was all this done, that it was only some two hours afterwards that we beat cautiously up the channel with the last of the flood, and cast anchor close to the mouth of the gully. All was perfectly still. We pulled ashore in our boat and stepped on land, when, in a moment, dark figures started up, lights flashed upon us, and we were surrounded by soldiers.

"'In the King's name!' said the officer, coming forward.

"It was a picturesque group, illuminated as it was by the flickering light of the torches which some of the soldiers carried. My tall, old grandsire, with his weater-beaten face and grey hair; the boyish, handsome young officer, bright with scarlet and gold, and steel; the stolid seamen in their blue jerseys and sou'westers; the soldiers with their bronzed faces and glittering accoutrements; and, I suppose, myself, disguised in a suit of oilskins and a big sou'wester that covered my rebellious hair.

"My grandfather said nothing when the young lieutenant ordered the sergeant to board the lugger; and only a twinkle of his keen, grey eye, showed his enjoyment of the scene. The soldiers had to row, and clumsily enough they did it, provoking one of the stolid seamen to a loud laugh, which he instantly suppressed.

"The sergeant was back again pretty soon, his face, formerly red, now purple with wrath.

"'We've been made fools of, sir!' he exclaimed, saluting the lieutenant. "'Nothing on board except some nets!'

"The lieutenant's face fell for a moment; then he looked amused at the sergeant's discomfiture.

"'Search them!' he said. 'We'll make it sure!'

"A couple of soldiers held my grandfather while the sergeant searched him, and found nothing. Nor did the others prove better worth examination.

"I was hiding behind my grandfather's back, hoping to escape observation. But the sergeant caught me by the wrist. My grandfather interposed.

"'There is nothing contraband on that boy!' said he, peremptorily.

"'I'll soon see that,' answered the soldier, grasping my wrist until I could have screamed with pain.

"My grandfather did not strike him, but administered a kind of push with his heavy shoulder that sent the sergeant, big as he was, staggering some yards away. With the loosing of his hold, I slipped and almost fell; off went my sou'wester, and down, alas! came my long brown hair all over me. The young officer instantly stepped between the sergeant and me.

"'I don't think we need search this youngster, sergeant,' he said, in a tone of quiet authority. 'He is not likely to have anything contraband about him. Where have you been to-night?' he added, turning to my grandfather, while I got into the background, greatly confused and conscious that the officer had found me out.

"'Lobster-fishing,' answered my grandfather, composedly.

"'Not much sport, I'm afraid,' said the lieutenant, sarcastically.

"'Oh yes, we caught a few,' answered my grandfather, glancing round at the soldiers' coats.

"The lieutenant was good-humoured, and could take a joke. 'Ah! but they're black when they're caught,' said he, with a smile that showed a very white and even set of teeth.

"'Aye, aye, sir,' said my grandfather, with a twinkle in his eye again. 'But they're red when they're done!'

"The lieutenant laughed outright. 'You've got the best of us this time, Mr. Wilson,' said he, preparing to depart. 'But,' he added in a lower tone, 'you had better be careful for the future. Meanwhile, I am sorry to have troubled you. Good-night.'

"He put himself at the head of his men, gave a sharp, short order, and away they went.

"And away we went. But my grandfather had learnt a lesson. He was a rich man, and gave up the trade from that very night, sold the lugger, and retired into private life."

Here my grandmother paused, and looked at the General with a smile.

"And did you never see the lieutenant again?" enquired a young lady of fourteen, who had long brown hair, probably like grandmamma's was once.

"My dear," said grandpapa, "*I* was the lieutenant."

ADONAIS, Q.C.

The Story of a Wager.

I.

"MRS. FEATHERSTONHAUGH at home?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Adonais fumbled in his card-case. "Is she quite well again?"

The footman opened his eyes. "Oh no, sir; but the day was so fine she thought a drive might do her good."

A card exchanged hands, and the door of the dainty Park Lane residence closed softly.

Oliver Adonais, Q.C., put back his card-case into his pocket, much relieved, and walked with long, swinging steps down the sun-parched thoroughfare.

The sun was shining on Adonais. It played on his sleek black hat, glared searchingly at the seams of his coat, lit up his reddish-brown hair and moustache, and would have done the same for his eyes had it been able. But Adonais was walking with his head in the air, and his brows knit, and his keen, splendid hazel eyes cast to the ground—for Adonais was thinking.

Sometimes grave, deep, and may be bitter thoughts will pass through a mind, and all that the world sees is a careless face. Sometimes it is just the other way. For here was the famous Oliver Adonais with a forehead as solemn and unfathomable as a sepulchre:—and what were his thoughts like?

"I'm glad they were out," he was saying to himself; "very glad. I don't like them. The men one meets there are—fools or fast; and the women—loud. I spent that evening with them, and I had to call to-day, of course. But there's an end of it. As for Mrs. Featherstonhaugh herself, I don't believe in her illness; simply don't believe in it; she's just as well as I am. Pretty woman enough, but unprincipled and cruel. I don't like her."

And Adonais turned sharp round a corner, and flicked a bit of straw viciously off the pavement with the end of his walking-stick.

"Mr. Adonais, how d'ye do?"

A tweed-coated youth had button-holed him. And he listened forthwith to a lengthy tirade on the bad prospects of the grouse shooting; to a little about a cricket match, and a great deal about a cricket club; then promised a handsome contribution to the latter, nodded a laughing good-bye, and sped on his way again. And lo! the sun-burnt face and shooting jacket passed like a dream from his mind—thoughts when they get into one's head are so difficult to get out

again sometimes—he took up the thread where he had let it fall, and went on thinking of the Featherstonhaughs.

"Don't like them; out and out Americans they are, and just the type of Americans I don't care about. The husband does seem a quiet, well-intentioned individual; but as for her—pretty woman enough, but —— Hilloa! and this is the Featherstonhaugh carriage, if I'm not mistaken; yes." Here he performed the manual labour of taking off his hat. "Thought a drive might do her good," and he smiled an amused smile to himself; "hope it has. That must be the sister, she spoke about, with her; very beautiful, but hard as a stone, I should say. Wonder who that fellow on the seat opposite was; I'm sure I know his face, and he looked as if he knew me."

"Well, Oliver, how d'ye do? Going down town, are you? Then we'll go with you, of course."

And Oliver Adonais, Q.C., smiled resignedly as a pair of noisy school-boy cousins took boisterous possession of him.

Meanwhile the open barouche, with its C-springs and high-stepping horses, swept round the corner of the street. The younger of the ladies stifled a yawn. "Who was that?" she asked lazily.

"Adonais, Q.C.," replied Mrs. Featherstonhaugh.

She opened her languid eyes slightly. "Who?"

The dark-complexioned man sitting opposite, answered her this time. "Oliver Adonais, Q.C."

"Adonais! What a strange name!"

He leaned back in his seat. "A good name; they are the oldest family in Loamshire; and there's another branch in the north of England. I have heard there are Adonaises in Ireland, but ——"

She moved impatiently. "Oh, if you please—enough. The very best of you English aristocrats, if one sets you off once on the subject of pedigree, there's absolutely no stopping you."

He laughed. "The pedigree of Oliver Adonais might be physiologically interesting: he has no heart."

Gabrielle Ryan smiled a little sarcastically. "No heart! But neither have a good many other people. Neither have I, for instance."

The bold blue eyes opposite studied her calmly. "Possibly not; sometimes I think I have none myself. But pardon me, Gabrielle; I wasn't talking of such as you and I: few people would suspect us of having hearts; we don't look like it. The strange and wonderful thing is, to know that a genial, amiable, happy-go-lucky individual like Adonais—and Oliver Adonais is all that—the strange and wonderful thing is, that verily and indeed he—has—no—heart."

Miss Ryan coloured slightly.

"In the first place, your politeness excels itself to-day," she returned. "And, secondly, how can you answer for Mr. Adonais's want of heart? How should you know anything about it?"

His eyes flashed mischievously. "I will tell you. Ten years ago

Oliver Adonais had newly joined the bar; to-day he is perhaps the most rising pleader in England. Then he was wealthy, and—an Adonais; to-day he is still an Adonais, of course, and—wealthier. Now, during these ten years—and this is the important part—during these ten years, the mothers and daughters of this London world have thought, planned, schemed and toiled to find out the heart of Adonais. And with what result? Total defeat: ergo, Adonais has no heart."

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh interposed now, impatiently. "Mr. Vaughan," she exclaimed, "listen to this: I was out at dinner the other evening, and in the drawing-room afterwards, Mr. Adonais formed the topic of conversation. His abilities and prospects were eulogised by everybody: and one old, white-haired gentleman, added—what do you think?"

"Well, what?"

"This: 'He has better than all that,' he said; 'he has the truest heart in England.'"

Roland Vaughan arched his eyebrows incredulously. "Where does he keep it, then?"

"Not on his sleeve evidently, as some do," said Miss Ryan: "to have it played with, and tossed aside at will, at the fancy of every passing breeze."

"Thank you, Miss Gabrielle," he returned, bending his head slightly. "I recognise myself to a nicety. However, if Mrs. Featherstonhaugh will excuse me, I must keep to my opinion: Adonais has no heart."

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh shook her head with the irritability of a woman who cannot brook contradiction. "He has a heart, of course," she remarked, shortly. Mr. Vaughan raised his hand quickly to his dark moustache, to conceal a sudden smile of amusement.

"Well, Mrs. Featherstonhaugh, suppose we ask your sister to find it out for us?—we might settle the dispute in that way. Gabrielle, does your pride need humiliation? Defeat means humiliation to you, does it not? I can promise you defeat."

"Mr. Vaughan—you are positively rude! And if," continued Gabrielle, her proud lips curling scornfully, "if *I* succeeded, whose, pray, would be the humiliation then?"

"Why mine; and his," laughed Mr. Vaughan.

"Yours alone," she retorted, beginning to take the matter seriously.

"Ah well; perhaps so. But I do not fear: you would stand no chance with Oliver Adonais."

Now fairly roused, Gabrielle raised herself with sudden energy.

"It is a challenge," she cried. "Before long I will have him at my feet."

Mr. Vaughan glanced at her with a mocking smile. "Pardon me," he said; "I am far from underrating your powers, but you never will. Or if you do, I promise to own myself most grievously mistaken in my knowledge of men and human nature."

"And what else?"

"What else? I will present you with a pair of gloves."

"Very well: it is a bet. I shall accept them, but on condition that you own yourself mistaken, and more than that—humiliated."

He laughed again. "To the dust, Miss Gabrielle," and a gleam of open admiration came into his bold eyes, as they rested on the pale, scornful, most lovely face opposite to him.

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh, who had listened to the conversation in surprise, flushed angrily. "Mr. Vaughan," she said, "as Gabrielle's future husband, how can you for a moment encourage anything so unprincipled and cruel?"

He leaned forward, and arranged the thin rug carefully over her.

"My dear lady," he laughed, "pray don't excite yourself—you forget that thereby hangs the whole kernel of the dispute. I hold that Adonais has no heart; if this be so, where is the cruelty?"

"And Gabrielle has really your sanction to do this?"

"Gabrielle and I understand each other perfectly. Do we not, Gabrielle?"

"Why, Claire, it is only for a little amusement," said the young lady.

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh stifled a sigh. "A little amusement! And what about the cost?"

Roland Vaughan crossed his arms, and looked at her. "The cost of Gabrielle's humiliation?"

Gabrielle drew herself up. "At the cost of yours, you mean," she returned; "and a pair of gloves."

"Ah, no," he said, for something in the word as applied to himself displeased him. "We can leave humiliation out of the question, then. No; all for a pair of gloves, Gabrielle." And he held his own suddenly in the air as the carriage drew up at the door-way.

She hesitated, and laughed. "Very well; all for a pair of gloves."

II.

"QUEER thing altogether; queer of Vaughan to call on me. We were college friends, it's true; but———after so many years!"

Mr. Adonais, as he speaks, is in evening dress, with the street lamps flickering in on him through the rain-bespattered windows, and the wheels of his hansom rattling a noisy accompaniment. His well-cut face wears an expression half-puzzled, half-vexed, and he leans back on the dusty cushions and gives himself up to his musings.

"And I had made up my mind to have nothing more to do with the Featherstonhaughs. They may be very nice, of course; but the thing is, I don't like them; nor the people one meets there. Roland Vaughan is certainly not a fool, like most of their male acquaintances, but he is hardly the man a steady-going fellow can have much in common with: now at least. At college it was different."

And Adonais laughed softly; and his thoughts swept back through a dozen years or so of hard work, physical and mental, and he fancied

himself once again in his Oxford rooms; the sun streaming in through the open windows, and the summer breeze redolent of stock and mignonette; then in that other season, a roaring fire in the grate, frost-covered panes, and the snow falling heavily and silently outside. Now in one scrape, just before the commemoration; now in another, and again in another. And wherever these thoughts of Adonais fell, the same bold blue eyes, and dark face, always stood out in prominence.

"Vaughan was daring," he mused, "and fascinating; and the great thing about him was his invincible determination. He had a hard heart, though; oh very! for I remember what he did to that poor little undergraduate." And here Adonais seemed to fall into deep and rather sad thought. And a carriage rolled past his cab, and two heads were stretched forward, and one voice said to another: "There's Adonais, the Queen's Counsel, going out to dinner." But Adonais did not know it. For his thoughts were far away and his keen eyes had lost their keenness; they were looking straight before him, out through the maze of raindrops to the ears of the jaded horse, bobbing up and down in the thickening gloom.

"Very hard! like the Featherstonhaugh females for that," and he smiled to himself. "But I suppose he must be related to Featherstonhaugh; he spoke as if he were when he brought the letter of invitation. For the sake of old times I couldn't have refused: but I don't like them, all the same."

The hansom stopped at the door in Park Lane, and he went up the wet steps, and into the brilliant hall, and from thence to the door of the drawing-room. The footman opened it and announced him. A rustle of satin, and Mrs. Featherstonhaugh's pale face—a little paler than usual—was turned towards him, and a limp hand was held out.

"How do you do, Mr. Adonais?" she said feebly.

"How do you do?" rang out the genial voice of Adonais. "Are you—ah—better?"

"I am always weak," and she moved slightly to make room for the outstretched hand of her husband; and then turning abruptly towards a figure on an adjoining couch: "Mr. Adonais, this is my sister Gabrielle."

An involuntary flash of surprise and admiration came into his eyes; but he dropped them quickly, and bowed low to the beautiful girl before him.

"How are you, Mr. Adonais? Terrible weather, isn't it?" And in this commonplace way, Gabrielle Ryan opened hostilities on the heart of Adonais.

He looked down at her comically: "I think we've had about one fine day this season."

She raised her long, dark eyes. "Yes, one," she answered. "I know we've had one; the day I first saw you was a fine day. We were driving and I asked your name, and I thought it such a strange name—Adonais."

She said the word slowly, pronouncing each syllable by itself, and if Adonais did not notice that it was like the changing tones of a bell, he might have done so. But Adonais was a man of the world; he recognised at once—just as he had done many and many a time before, and just with the same inward amusement—the opening attack of an enemy. He did not know, of course, that his great heart lay in one scale, and a little pair of gloves in the other; but this he did know—that Miss Gabrielle Ryan condescended to flirt with him.

"I have rather an objection to the name," he laughed; "it is too ambitious. It is the most ambitious name I know; and, you see, it is apt to make its bearer ridiculous."

Gabrielle clasped and unclasped her white fingers thoughtfully. "I understand you," she said. "I had a friend in New York, L'Amour; and Love and Truelove are common names where I come from. I used to think these rather ridiculous; but Adonais sounds so—very different."

He laughed again, and shot a quick keen look at her from his smiling eyes. "Yes; it is possible to think of these others as abstract terms; but Adonais is so much more personal."

"How d'ye do, Adonais?" Roland Vaughan had come slowly into the room, with that half-slouch, half-lounge familiar to everyone who knew him, and—a curious look on his face—was standing beside them.

Adonais turned. "Well, Vaughan, how are you? Do you know, I fell into a reverie upon olden days on my way up here."

"Not a very pleasant one for you, I should say, eh?" laughed Mr. Vaughan, but there was something of a sneer in his laugh. Adonais drew himself up slightly.

"It was *not* wholly pleasant. Miss Ryan, I fear we used to be—scapegoats."

Vaughan leaned back on the mantelpiece. "I expect we were," he cried. "I have seen very little of you lately, Adonais. The fact is," he added suddenly, "I went on in the same old path and you struck out another. I think that's just about it."

Adonais smiled kindly up at him. "Ah, well, the paths may meet again some day—who knows? May they not, Miss Ryan?"

She lifted her eyes, and looked from one to the other of them.

"Yes, the two may run together for a while." There was meaning in her tone; Vaughan laughed shortly and turned suddenly away. Adonais bent gracefully towards her.

"The General Election approaches, and hints are dangerous. Now Miss Ryan, do you mean that I've designs on Vaughan's borough—Oh, dinner!" and he stopped abruptly as the door was thrown open. "I believe I take you in."

A long white table, sparkling with glass and silver; bright masses of colour and dark heavy foliage here and there; a pale soft light from the lamps and candles shining over all. It was a pretty sight; and

Adonais—listening to the splutter of rain on the window outside, as opposed to the pleasant-toned talk of the guests, and the soft rustle of the ladies' dresses, as they swept through the hall—made up his mind that, after all, dinners at the Featherstonhaughs were not bad things; and that it was just as well he accepted the invitation Vaughan had brought to him.

When they were seated, Gabrielle Ryan turned to him. "Speaking of Mr. Vaughan's borough—has he any chance of getting in again, do you think?"

Adonais evaded the question. "The General Election is at hand and—Vaughan's eyes are upon us."

She smiled slightly. "But seriously, Mr. Adonais—has he any chance?"

He bent his head over his plate. "Seriously, Miss Ryan, I cannot say. One hears such conflicting reports about things that it is not safe to believe any of them."

The diamonds round her beautiful neck flashed in the lamp light.

"That is true," she answered, thoughtfully. "One does hear conflicting reports about things; and about people."

Adonais looked down at her. "People exaggerate about things, and about other people," he said; "some the good, some the evil. It is that which causes the confliction."

Gabrielle turned, and raised her steady, long-lashed eyes to his. "I do not know. What can you think of this? It is a case in point. At the same place, at the same hour, I heard: first, Mr. Adonais, that you had no heart; and again, that yours was the truest heart in England."

Adonais, man of the world though he was, was taken by surprise. The colour deepened on his forehead; for once in his life he racked his brains in vain to find a suitable answer. After a minute, he laughed.

"Well, Miss Ryan," he said, slowly, "that is, as you say, an example of what I was telling you; some have exaggerated the good, and some the bad." Then, with a short, quiet clearance of the throat, which acted as a full stop to that part of the conversation, "May I pass you the salt?" he added, rather coldly. For, to tell the truth, besides being surprised, he was just a little disappointed and shocked that a pretty, well-bred woman should have done anything so singular and startling as to repeat these personalities to him.

Startling—that was just it. Like many another man, he hated to be startled. It was disappointing, and puzzling. He answered a question from his opposite neighbours with rather unnecessary minuteness; then suddenly put a query in turn, the answer to which he certainly did not care to know. For the puzzled feeling gathered over him. He began to ask himself, and by-and-by he could do nothing but ask himself, what was the meaning of Gabrielle Ryan's having said what she did say. What had she meant? and how should he, Adonais, receive it? This stately, dark-eyed beauty, was no ingenuous

school-girl; that he knew: but she was an American; and American women—let them be charming as they may, American women do, and ever will do, odd things sometimes. If that were all, he could afford to be genial over it; but if she had deliberate designs of attracting him to her, why he objected to any such bold hostilities.

At any rate it was rather amusing; and with a half smile he turned his eyes drolly upon her. A strange look came into them as he noted the downcast lip, and the colour coming and going on her round cheek. For never had Gabrielle looked or felt more crestfallen. She had failed ignominiously, and she knew it. He bent kindly towards her. "And so there was a dispute about my heart?"

She hesitated. This man seemed to read her through and through.

"Yes."

"And may I ask how it was decided?"

"Mr. Adonais, it was *not* decided."

"Ah! and was the matter really allowed to rest on such frightful uncertainty? What folly!"

She laughed feebly. "The decision was deferred, Mr. Adonais."

He shot a keen look at her again. "And meantime the mystery would have to be solved?"

"Oh yes, of course," she stammered, playing with her bracelet uncomfortably.

He laughed, now really amused. "And who was to solve it, I wonder?" he asked, turning his face to her. "Perhaps you?"

This time it was Gabrielle who flushed to the eyes; all self-possession utterly forsook her. What should she do? Where should she look? How should she answer? Her thoughts were whirling in mad confusion. To be convicted—she, proud Gabrielle—to be convicted, in indirect language, it is true, but still convicted of having designs upon a heart! And, that, by the man whose heart she had undertaken to capture! And this in the presence of a London dinner-party! Roland Vaughan had prophesied humiliation; surely this was something worse.

She turned suddenly towards him, the most abject entreaty written on every feature of her face.

"Mr. Adonais!" she said; "Mr. Adonais—please let us talk of something else."

He bowed politely. "Certainly. I think we began this evening with the weather: can you suggest another subject? or may I? Do you know, I have to make a speech at a provincial flower-show to-morrow, this said weather permitting; and I had just made up my mind to ask if you would tell me the names of a few of these flowers on the table—that I may not appear so totally ignorant as I am—when you startled me. Perhaps you will help me now?"

Gabrielle turned her face once again to him. "Oh, yes!" and her voice struggled for calmness. "That beside you is a pelargonium."

"And opposite?"

"Hydrangea."

"Ah! By the way, what sort of flowers have you in Florida? That might come in so usefully."

"In Florida," she repeated mechanically: and for one instant there was a beautiful look in her eyes which neither Adonais, nor his heart, nor the flowers brought there. "Yes, Florida is a lovely place. Oh, and the flowers?—there are many flowers. I remember one, long-shaped and blue as a Florida sky. It grew by thousands about the banks of the river at the foot of our garden; and in the summer evenings my sisters and I used to stray up and down, and sit amongst it, to revel in the sweetness of its perfume. Mr. Adonais, have you ever been in Florida?"

"No," he answered, and his eyes rested very kindly on the girl's pale face, its ever-varying expression struggling betwixt victory and defeat, as she strove to regain the mastery over herself. "But that was a charming little bit of description. I wish you would tell me more about it."

So the dinner passed on. Many voices talked and laughed; attendants' footsteps hurried softly to and fro; the glasses and the plates chinked; and the flowers drooped just a little in the heat and light; and Gabrielle spoke, and Adonais listened. When Mrs. Featherstonhaugh rose, Adonais would fain have gone on listening; for Gabrielle had spoken as she seldom did—from her heart. She was away among the orange groves and the citrons, the sweet memories of the past. She had forgotten all about Adonais' heart, and the pair of gloves; almost about Adonais himself.

He smiled more than once, over his wine and walnuts, at the thought of what she had revealed to him about that heart of his. So this was what the world said of him! Well—was it true, any part of it? Had he no heart? Had he the truest heart in England? Roland Vaughan asked his opinion on some political question, and he gave it, and cracked another walnut; and went on with what he was thinking about. Had he the truest heart in England? Of course Adonais did not ask himself such a question seriously; but he found it pleasant to wonder in a half-joking, half-dreamy way; and to go over his own surprise again in his mind; his surprise when Gabrielle said the words, and looked so fixedly and steadily out of her grave dark eyes into the depths of his.

He did not quite understand what she was thinking of; what she had meant by coming out so flatly with it all. But he did not wonder very long about that: the laughter so soon welled-up at the thought of all that followed. "To say I have no heart," pondered Adonais; "that's wrong, perhaps: then—I have the truest heart in England? And Miss Gabrielle is to decide the dispute, is she? Ah well! I must speak more about that to her anon."

And when they rose in their turn, and he had gone with the rest into the long drawing-room, his eyes went straight to the calm graceful figure at the further end of it. He made his way there and bending down, spoke.

Ah, but would he have done it?—would he have spoken had he known the storm that was raging under the veil of a dignified carriage and a pale grey princess robe, which shone and shimmered like the waters of a Highland loch at dawn? If Gabrielle had forgotten, just for a little, that she had staked on the heart of Adonais, and so far had been humiliated, she remembered it all now with more than redoubled force. There was something in her better nature urging her to give up the heart of Adonais and the gloves for ever; but the thought of her own defeat and ignominy, and, above all, the thought of Roland's taunts, made the breath come hard and fast, as if it stifled her. It had been said of Roland Vaughan, that if his hatred was a bitter thing, his jeer was a worse, and harder to bear; and Gabrielle Ryan would have told you that this was true. She knew the look in the bold eyes, and the turn of the hard mouth—the eyes and mouth of the man she had promised herself to. She knew it; and, making an effort, cast aside all better thoughts. She would win the pair of gloves—and the heart of Adonais.

He had made his way to her, and was bending down to speak.

"My heart, Miss Ryan—I have been thinking about it: what are you to tell them about my heart?"

The passing weakness had flown; she raised her pale face to his.

"What shall I tell them?" she answered gently.

"Well—is it true, do you think, that I have none?"

"I—do not think so."

His eyes gleamed a little mischievously. "When must the dispute be decided?"

This time she neither changed colour nor drooped her face from his. "At my leisure, I suppose."

Adonais hesitated a moment before replying. "Then the answer may wait?"

She smiled. "Oh, yes. It may wait, of course."

The guests were gone. Adonais trod the wet pavement, for the rain had ceased, and it pleased him to walk, and indulge his thoughts. And Gabrielle on her way up to her bedroom was stopped on the staircase; stopped twice.

Once, a woman with a cold white face, just touched the girl's brow with her lips. "Good-night, Gabrielle. Have you—have you no mercy, child?"

She opened her eyes. "*Mercy*, Claire?"

"Yes; mercy on Mr. Adonais. Wait a minute: I am so weak and tired. If you have no mercy for his sake, have a little for mine."

Gabrielle hesitated a moment, and passed on. "Claire! how can you be so ridiculous!"

A little further up, she was met again. A hand was laid upon her shoulder.

"Well, Gabrielle, are you tired? I saw you were doing your best

for the pair of gloves, but you didn't make much of it. It will end as I said it would."

Then he kissed her and said good-night; for she was to be his wife: and she passed on again, shaking her head half in scorn, half laughingly. After all, she did love him in a way. But when he had turned alone into the smoking-room he threw up the gas with an impatient jerk, and down went a bundle of cigars upon the table.

"Dangerous," he muttered to himself; "far too dangerous. Fool that I was to propose such a thing! That fellow Adonais, if he dare only!—or Gabrielle either ——"

A long half hour of doubt, of heavy striding to and fro in the room; then he turned the gas slowly down again.

"She never *would* dare—that. And for the rest—what does it matter?"

III.

The carriages roll along, the people hurry to and fro on the pavement, the church clocks chime in the distant steeples; and the afternoon sun glares down on all the toil and turmoil, and plays with the reddish-brown hair and moustache of Mr. Adonais. He is in Oxford Street—walking with long, swinging steps, and thinking as usual.

What were his thoughts like? and where was the heart of Adonais? Gone. The heart was gone. He had given it to a girl with grave, dark eyes, and a beautiful face; a girl with whom he had latterly spent much of his time. It was gone for ever.

"She loves me," he was saying to himself. "Adonais, she loves you. Gabrielle loves you! The roll of the carriage wheels echoes it, the footsteps of the people repeat it to me, and the clocks and the bells chime it out to me. Oliver Adonais, Gabrielle loves you. Each house I pass takes life and says it to me—always the same; and every street I turn into breaks out anew, but always with the same—Gabrielle, loves you. They must know—I must know; they cannot be wrong—I cannot be wrong—you *do* love me, Gabrielle: we cannot both be wrong:—you do love me."

A beggar child asked him for a penny, and he gave her half-a-crown. A broken-down friend stopped him timidly for the loan of a pound, and he promised him ten. Well, it was for the sake of Gabrielle. A painter's boy brushed roughly past him, and stained his coat-sleeve a brilliant red; but Adonais walked on with a smile, thinking that here was something for Gabrielle to laugh at. Oliver Adonais, Q.C., with a painted coat in Oxford Street!

Meanwhile a carriage stood at a doorway. Inside sat a girl with a beautiful face, and grave dark eyes that saw—yet without seeing—what was passing around her. She was there herself, but her thoughts were not there. They were with Mr. Adonais! Gabrielle Ryan in dreamland; dreaming of Adonais!

And her dreams ran thus: "I love him. This is your punishment,

Gabrielle Ryan—you love him. This is the end of your boastful intrigue. And he has given you his heart: the truest heart in England! he loves you. It is your heart now; and what must you do with it? not crush it. This is the end of it all; you have promised yourself to Roland Vaughan, and you must keep to your promise. Oh misery! is there no hope? even yet is there not any hope? None; you must keep to your plighted word. You know Roland Vaughan; you know what he has done for your father, and mother, and sisters, all for your sake; with a sneer on his lips, still all for your sake. And besides, listen: you dare not give him up; you dare not, Gabrielle Ryan. Oh misery, misery! and I love you, Oliver, as man was never loved."

Ever hurrying nearer, at last he is close. She sees him, and bends suddenly and eagerly forward.—"Mr. Adonais!"

"Gabri— Miss Gabrielle, how are you?"

"I am quite well."

Then comes a pause and they look at each other; the words take long to rise sometimes when hearts are full. Gabrielle seizes on the first thing which strikes her.

"Mr. Adonais! Look at your coat!"

"Yes; somebody has been painting it for me."

"But how? What a pity!"

"Oh no, I rather liked it; it brought things to my mind." She looked at him wonderingly.

"What things?"

He smiled. "Well, I can't tell you exactly. Perhaps the pale blue flowers that grew by thousands about the river at the foot of your garden; the flowers amongst which you and your sisters used to sit in the summer evenings to revel in the sweetness of their perfume."

She laughed and coloured slightly. "Now that is absurd, Mr. Adonais!" and, glancing hastily round: "My sister is in one of these shops. Where are you going? Can we drive you anywhere?"

The sunshine laughed in his eyes. "Thank you; but I don't know where I am going exactly."

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh was coming out; Gabrielle turned to her. "Claire, here is Mr. Adonais. He was hurrying along rapidly, although he doesn't know where he is going, he says." And all of a sudden, because her heart was beating wildly, and she was struggling for calmness, struggling to quell the misery which was ever there, and to still the flash of joy now illuminating it; suddenly, because these things oppressed her, and would have an outlet, Gabrielle Ryan burst into a rippling peal of laughter. And he, knowing not what had caused it, laughed too. And Mrs. Featherstonhaugh stood, pale and cold as an icicle, between them.

"The fact is," said Adonais; "the fact is, I was going to call upon you, Mrs. Featherstonhaugh."

What could she do? "Will you drive home with us now, then?"

"I should like to," and he smiled at Gabrielle. "And are you better?" he asked, as he helped her in.

"I am always weak," she answered: and she leaned back in the carriage, and looked coldly and haughtily at him. Mrs. Featherstonhaugh didn't like him, Adonais fancied: but Gabrielle did. And the keen hazel eyes of Oliver Adonais blazed and burned with love and admiration, as they rested on the beautiful face opposite him. "Oh Gabrielle, Gabrielle!" She was all he could think of, and the carriage rolled on, and two women were sitting in it with sorrowful hearts. Whose was the sorrow hardest to bear?

Adonais sat down to tea with them in the sombre drawing-room, rich colouring around him, glittering Dresden and Sèvres china brightening the gloom up here and there. The end was coming near. Gabrielle knew it, and trembled; talking the while of the weather, and the last race, and the newest book, and the pictures of the year, and drinking tea out of the dainty tea-cups, just as usual until at last there was a pause in the conversation, and Adonais deliberately faced Mrs. Featherstonhaugh. "Your sister promised last night to show me that collection of coins in the library," he said; and, turning himself slightly, "and you forgot to do so, Miss Gabrielle. May I ask to see them now?"

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh's face paled; but Gabrielle rose, calm and self-possessed. The end had come at last; well, it was better that it had—she would bear it.

Side by side through the broad hall, the stained glass of the windows throwing beams of coloured light upon them, they passed into the library. Mr. Adonais shut the door and turned to her. "Gabrielle!" he cried.

The sharp snap of a glass door beyond, opening quickly, was heard. A moment's hesitation, and Ronald Vaughan, darkness on his face, came forward from the conservatory and stood beside them.

"How d'ye do, Adonais. Sorry to interrupt you, I'm sure, but I thought it was a good opportunity to ask you for your congratulations. You never have given me them, you know."

Mr. Adonais stared at him. "My congratulations!"

"Yes. You know, don't you, that Gabrielle is to marry me? Gabrielle has told you that, of course."

Adonais leaned suddenly back on the book-case. "What do you mean?" he said abruptly—and his face had grown so white, white to the lips, that even the cruel eyes looking at him softened in mercy.

"Why, Adonais, I mean that Gabrielle is engaged to me; has been engaged to me for ages. We shall shortly be married now. And you did not know it!"

The walls of the library, and Vaughan, and Gabrielle—Gabrielle with her marble face and motionless figure—the walls, and Vaughan,

and Gabrielle, swam round Oliver Adonais. He sat down suddenly, and raising his hand with a quick motion, covered his eyes.

"Are you joking, Vaughan?" he asked, quietly.

"Joking!—not I. Gabrielle!" and he turned to her almost fiercely, "say whether I am joking or not; speak the truth."

"It is the truth, Mr. Adonais," she answered, without moving or looking towards him: and her voice was quite hard in its forced calmness.

Adonais rose. There was a dazed look in his eyes; his brows were knit together as those of a man in bodily agony; but he held up his head, and his voice was calm; harder than Gabrielle's had been.

"Yes, I congratulate you, Vaughan, of course. It *was* strange that I never heard of this before, wasn't it?"

Without another word, bowing low to the girl's still figure, Mr. Adonais passed out of the room, out at the doorway—for ever; and so on down the sun-parched thoroughfare.

A mighty steamer on the open sea. It had left the docks that morning, threading its way through the maze of masts of the misty river. Down it, always down it; past the grey walls of Tilbury Fort, onwards till the banks widened, and grew indistinct and the lonely light-ships were left in the distance. And now here it was, heaving and tossing grandly upon the open sea.

A gentleman paced the deck with long swinging strides. The sailors hurried to and fro; the captain was up on the bridge; and the other passengers loitered about, some on the seats, and some at the sides of the vessel. But this man paced on alone, his head in the air, and his brows knit well together—for he was thinking.

"Who is he, I wonder?" whispered one voice to another, as he paused for a moment beside the head of the cabin stairs.

"Hush! don't you know? A sad thing—very; and strange. No one understands it. Of course something must have happened; or he never would spoil his life in this way. A rising man he was, sir, the man of the future; but he threw it all up to go a voyage to the Antipodes: and here he is, you see."

"But *who* is he?" whispered the other again, a little impatiently.

"Bless me—don't you know?" He clutched his hat, for the wind had caught it in a gust, and would have whirled it away. "I thought everybody knew him—Adonais, Q.C."

And so a life was spoiled, and a heart was lost, and a heart was won—and the truest heart in England was broken.

And all for a pair of gloves!

FIFTY POUNDS REWARD.

By Minnie Douglas.

I.

IT was the Christmas week, and "things" had come to the worst. When a young married clerk suddenly loses his situation in a provincial bank where employers are reducing their hands, it does not follow that work can be had for the asking in London; and so Mr. Tom Craven found himself still seeking employment many months after his savings had dwindled down to a few pounds. The last resource of the young couple was the sale of every available article of value they possessed, and when my story opens young Mrs. Craven was on the point of starting to sell the last remaining valuable—namely, her husband's boots.

"The children must live," said the young man, looking at two tiny figures in the bed; "and all my other clothes are done for, so the boots are no use to me. The only trouble is that *you* should have to take them, Clara."

"But, Tom, you can't go without boots!"

"I've got slippers," replied Tom. "Make haste, dear—no one will see you in the dark."

Resolved to keep up, Clara stooped for the boots. "Something must turn up soon—perhaps you'll hear from Brown and Co. to-morrow," she said.

"Very likely," responded Tom, in a desponding tone. Brown and Co. were his late employers, and he had written to them asking if they could possibly take him back—with faint hopes of success.

Quickly the boots were put into an old leather bag, and Mrs. Craven dressed herself in a shabby waterproof and bonnet, and covered her face with a thick veil. Then she crept down the creaking old stairs and out into the narrow street with a heavy heart, and eyes into which the tears would come. It was one of those old Westminster streets which are so close to the dwellings of the great, and yet dirty and disreputable themselves. The respectable persons dwelling there had all been reduced to the depths of poverty. The other inhabitants were chiefly remarkable for their varied vices.

Gusts of wind made the street lamps flicker and cast strange shadows as Clara Craven sped on towards the shop where "left-off" clothing was purchased. She paused a few doors off to let some persons go on their way, for she was sorely ashamed of her errand: and as she stood thus her eyes fell on a placard that was fixed under the light of a lamp on the wall of a police station.

"£50 Reward."

"Fifty pounds!—how nice to get it!" thought Mrs. Craven: and

then she took another look to see if the coast was clear for the business she had in hand. Two more people were coming. Back went her eyes to the placard, and she read that this reward was offered to any person who would give such information as would lead to the conviction of the perpetrator of a daring jewel robbery.

"Wish I could catch the thief!" said Clara to herself, half laughing, half sadly; and when she looked again towards the wardrobe shop she saw she might venture in. After hearing her husband's boots depreciated in every possible manner, she timidly accepted the pitiful price offered, and then stole back into the street. There she purchased a few of the absolute necessaries of life, and ordered some coals: which a greengrocer's boy wheeled in a barrow behind her until they reached the door of the lodging-house.

"Would you mind carrying them up to my room in two baskets-ful, if I give you twopence?" asked Clara, gently.

The boy nodded by way of answer, and the young wife opened the door with her latch-key, and ran up for an old basket. While she was getting this out of her room a man had swiftly entered the house and passed up the stairs. The coal-boy never noticed him, for his back was turned to the door, and he was eagerly watching the signs of an approaching fight between two tom-cats on an opposite door-step. The staircase was very dark, so when Clara came down with the basket the man had squeezed himself into a corner unobserved; and when she went on her way, the stranger passed on to the top of the house, and entered the room behind that occupied by the Cravens.

An hour later a snug glow of fire warmed the young couple and their children; and the latter having been satisfied with a meal, went sound asleep. Tom watched his wife's busy fingers mending shabby clothes for awhile; and then he too went to bed, sharing her fervent hope that "something good would turn up to-morrow."

And so it came about that, when all were fast asleep, Clara sat on by the fire that still burned cheerily; and after eleven strokes had fallen slowly from the big clock, and the restless roar of traffic was somewhat less in the ever busy streets, her hands lay idle in her lap, and she blew out the candle to save its light for another time, and turned such a sad young face, such troubled blue eyes upon the flickering fire, that it seemed hard, hard so young a life should be so old in sorrow.

A sound of voices in the next room roused her. There was a door of communication between the two rooms, which was of course locked, but which made sounds easily heard. Clara knew that their neighbour was an elderly woman; she had met her on the stairs sometimes, and she wondered who her visitor could be at such an hour. Then the sound of frightened sobbing and expostulation made her listen attentively, for she feared her neighbour was in trouble, and determined to rouse her husband, if necessary.

"Not yet, Joe! Oh, don't say you must go yet!"

"Mother, I've stayed too long already. They'll be all after me sharp, now the reward's out! Think of £50, mother! The men who tempted me, and got the jewels, would round on me now and get the reward."

This was it, then! But one slight wooden door stood between Clara and the thief she had said she wished she could find! Only to step round the corner. There, she knew, was the police station, and for the news she brought them she would get £50! She clasped her hands tight, and sat perfectly still, all the while knowing that every second lessened her chance of securing this living piece of property valued at £50. In her present straits, £50 seemed a fortune to her. No one who has not gone through a similar experience can ever know what that temptation was to Mrs. Craven. As she sat, her strained ears caught the mother's voice again.

"I'll not keep you, though my heart is breaking. My bonny boy come to this! Oh, God, most merciful, save him from a felon's doom!"

"Mother, pray for me. If I escape, I vow to lead an honest life and make a home for you. It has not been my fault. Pray God to forgive and help me."

Clara's grasp of her hands relaxed. Then with white face, and sorrowful eyes, she stood up and looked at her two tiny sleeping boys. Then on her knees she fell, and stayed in earnest prayer until she heard the stealthy footsteps creep down the stairs, and the front door closed: and then she stole to the window of her darkened room, and looking out into the lamp-lit street, watched a quick walking figure in an old country woman's cloak with a deep cape, and a large poke bonnet, such as her old neighbour always wore: and she knew that the young man had escaped in his mother's clothes.

II.

One of the most old-fashioned houses in an old country town was Miss Greybrook's. A steep flight of immaculately clean steps led from the pavement of the High Street to her hall door with its shining brass knocker and bell-handle. On each side of this hall door was a large bow-window, just high enough to make it inconvenient for any one to offer to shake hands with Miss Greybrook when they were in the street and she was tending her flowers in the window. At the back of the broad hall that went straight across the house there were steps leading down into large, well-kept gardens, and these were enclosed by a substantial brick wall that effectually protected the fruit and flowers from pilfering fingers:

Inside the house everything was expressive of wealth and solid comfort. Miss Greybrook herself was regarded by the towns-folk as peculiar, but her peculiarity being accompanied by riches, she was never made to feel it unpleasantly. In person she was tall and angular, and a pair of piercing black eyes that shone out in vivid

contrast to her grey hair gave her a remarkable appearance. Her caps were always made high, and her dresses shorter than anybody else's, and she made no change for fashion or favour.

Now this old lady was Mr. Tom Craven's godmother. And on the very cold, dull winter morning, of which I have now to speak, she had risen from her high-backed chair in front of the bright steel fender at sound of the postman's knock, and advanced to meet the elderly servant who brought in the letters on a silver salver.

"None from him," said the old lady, when she was alone again, turning over four letters eagerly in search of a handwriting that was not there. "Poor and proud, like his father! Well, I've seen much folly in my time, but if he refuses my offer, I question if there *is* a companion idiot for such a man!"

It was three weeks since she had written to Tom Craven, addressing her letter to the office of Brown and Co., by whom she thought he was still employed, and offering to overlook the hideous mistake he had made in marrying a penniless orphan-girl, and to devote a substantial sum to further his prospects in life. On the very morning that she was bewailing openly her godson's pride, and secretly her own, our friend Tom received a reply to the letter he had sent to Brown and Co., politely regretting that they could do nothing further to help him; and enclosing Miss Greybrook's letter: which had been lying nearly three weeks at their office.

Clara, with the sadness of the last night's struggle still upon her, ran down the rickety stairs at sound of the postman's knock, and received the letter for her husband. When she arrived, breathless, at the top floor again, she watched his face as he opened it. The few polite lines from the business men fell unread to the ground, while the envelope they enclosed was torn eagerly open. Clara looked over his shoulder and read too, and then with one glance at the renewed light and vigour in his worn, anxious face, she relinquished her rôle of bravery, and cried out the misery of months in his arms. Bobby walked and Bertie crawled to the scene of action, and seeing their mother in tears, lent a shrill aid to the chorus. Upon which they were kissed, blessed, and cried over till they thought the world (represented to them by their father and mother) had gone mad. When partial calmness was restored, Tom spoke joyously:

"Now wife, take a shilling of your small store, and send a telegram from me to the dear old girl!"

"Tom!" cried his wife, laughing through her tears, "how disrespectful!"

But the telegram was sent, and brought in solemn wonderment to Miss Greybrook's door before ten o'clock by the postmaster himself. The yellow envelope shook in the old servant's hand, and was taken from her to tremble still more in that of Miss Greybrook. When once she had the open pink paper in front of her eyes, and devoured the information that her godson was in London, and desirous of seeing her

immediately, she gave orders for a fly to be in readiness to catch the next up train, and that her fur travelling cloak and boots should be put to the fire immediately. In the anxiety that all the domestics felt to take a share in the general excitement, Miss Greybrook's cloak threatened to be torn in pieces, and when wanted, one fur boot was found warming in front of the kitchen fire, the other reposing on the sheep-skin rug beside the drawing-room steel fender. However, vouchsafing never a word of explanation, but happily for the sanity of those she left behind, dropping the telegram in the hall as she walked out to the fly, Miss Greybrook started alone on her travels.

The dull, foggy shades of a London winter evening had gathered, and two big and two little faces were pressed tight against the grimey top windows of a house in a Westminster street, as a cab drove up.

"Go and bring her up-stairs, Clara," said Tom. "I can't go in my slippers."

"Yes—but I'm so afraid of her!"

All fears were obliged to disappear, however, for the object of them had not waited to be brought up. She had intimidated the landlady by the commanding voice in which she had desired to be shown to the apartments of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Greybrook Craven; and that fat and lazy person had preceded the strange lady rapidly up so many flights, that on reaching the top landing Miss Greybrook stood silent and stately, for she could not speak. She waved the landlady down again, just as the latter wanted to look in and see what would happen next.

Then Tom advanced, and his godmother kissed him first, then his wife. Then, observing Bobby and Bertie, she grimly smiled, and remarked aloud, but to herself, evidently:

"Children, of course!—being as poor as church mice."

Looking round the wretched room, and shaking the three chairs, she chose the least rickety, and sat down.

"Pack up—haven't got much to pack that I can see. You must all come back with me to-night."

Tom Craven and his wife exchanged glances, and at last Tom deferentially ventured to speak:

"You see, dear godmother, we—we need a few things to make us presentable at your house."

"Eh! what? My house is my own. Come as you are."

The worst must be said, then! "But—please excuse such a state of matters, but—I've got no boots!"

Miss Greybrook gasped, and stared from one to the other.

"*Boots!* my godson without *boots?* Here, Clara—that's your name, I believe—run out, child, and buy all you need for everybody: and let us get out of this place: I can't breathe."

Away ran poor Clara, holding the fat purse Miss Greybrook pushed into her hand, and all unconscious what she carried in it. It felt so full, however, that she took a cab and drove first to a boot shop where

she purchased for her husband, her children, and herself. Then came a big overcoat for Tom, and wraps for the little ones—and she told the cabman to drive home fast. She had paid for her purchases with gold, and bank notes crackled as she closed the purse.

Miss Greybrook carried out her intention, and bustled them all off to the station. The children slept all the way in the comfortable first-class carriage. It was eleven o'clock when they drove up to the door of the old lady's house, and she grimly counted five heads in nightcaps thrust out into the night air from her neighbour's windows —amongst them the Rector's, with a flannel rolled round as extra protection.

Inside the house all was done in the right way as soon as the word was given.

"My godson, his wife, and children have come to live with me. Light large fires in the two best rooms, and get supper."

III.

THREE years had passed. Tom was flourishing in a large firm in a seaport town where his godmother's money had bought him a partnership. It was only a short daily railway journey to his work, and he and his family were still happy inmates of Miss Greybrook's house. One day Clara accompanied her husband to this seaport town; and before taking leave of him at his office door, and proceeding to make the purchase which was her ostensible reason for bringing her bonnie face and fresh winter costume through the grimy streets, she waited while he went in for a book he wanted her to change.

While she was standing outside, great crowds of poor, respectable looking people came in and passed on to a large room beyond. She was told they were emigrants, just about to start for New Zealand. She watched their faces with kindly interest as young and old passed by, and presently a woman who seemed old to be thinking of such a journey dropped her purse just in front of Clara, who stooped to pick it up. In returning it she saw what made her stop the woman and eagerly question her. Yes, it was her fellow lodger in the old Westminster street, and with a face of quiet happiness she told the lady that a young son who had gone to New Zealand three years before had sent her money to join him. "He's my only one, ma'am, and was a trouble to me once, but praise God he's doing well now!"

Then Clara in gentle tones wished her well, and when her husband came back to her she reminded him of the events of that miserable night which seemed so far—so very far off from the prosperous to-day, and in a hushed and reverent tone, she said:

"Thank God, Tom, we never had that '£50 Reward!'"

THE COLONEL'S NEW YEAR.

THE Colonel sat beside the fire (you know the Colonel, grave and slim),
It used to be my wife's desire to make a match 'twixt Belle and him
When he was captain: now he's grey, and something over forty-five—
I'll back my wife to get her way with any colonel that's alive!

He told us of his sister Jane, with whom he meant to start a house;
A person elderly and plain, we fancied, duller than a mouse:
While that arch-hypocrite, my wife, cried, "How delightful!" to his plan,
"You ought to lead a charming life in town with her, you lucky man!"

Then hurriedly a question came (he coughed between and stroked the cat):
"Miss Belle?—excuse the girlish name; I always used to call her that
Before I went to India; now, of course, it would not do so well.
How is she?" Ere we told him how, in walked the all-unconscious Belle.

Dear Belle! her cheek is scarce as round as when he knew her at nineteen;
Her voice has caught a graver sound, echo of changes that have been
In these ten years; but blithe and true, her eyes lit up with pleased surprise
The voice says, "Is it really you?" "How good to see you!" say the eyes.

The Rectory children, Chris and Clem, had brought her thro' the winter lanes:
They eye the Colonel; he eyes them—nor even yet my wife explains—
(She has some plot, tho' what it be is not for feeble man to guess)—
That Belle, the belle in '73, is Belle the Rector's governess!

Sure never yet since boys began, have ever boys been so regaled
As Chris and Clem, whose inner man responds altho' their tongues have failed;
Cakes, crumpets, short-bread, with a will, my wife has plied them, nothing loth;
And if our elder guests are still, by Jove, but she can talk for both!

She talks about the Colonel's house, she talks about the Rector's cold,
She talks of Scotland and the grouse, the Curate and the village scold
Of furnishing and shades of green, of book-clubs and a fancy fair
(They can't get in one word between, I think, this most ill-treated pair!)

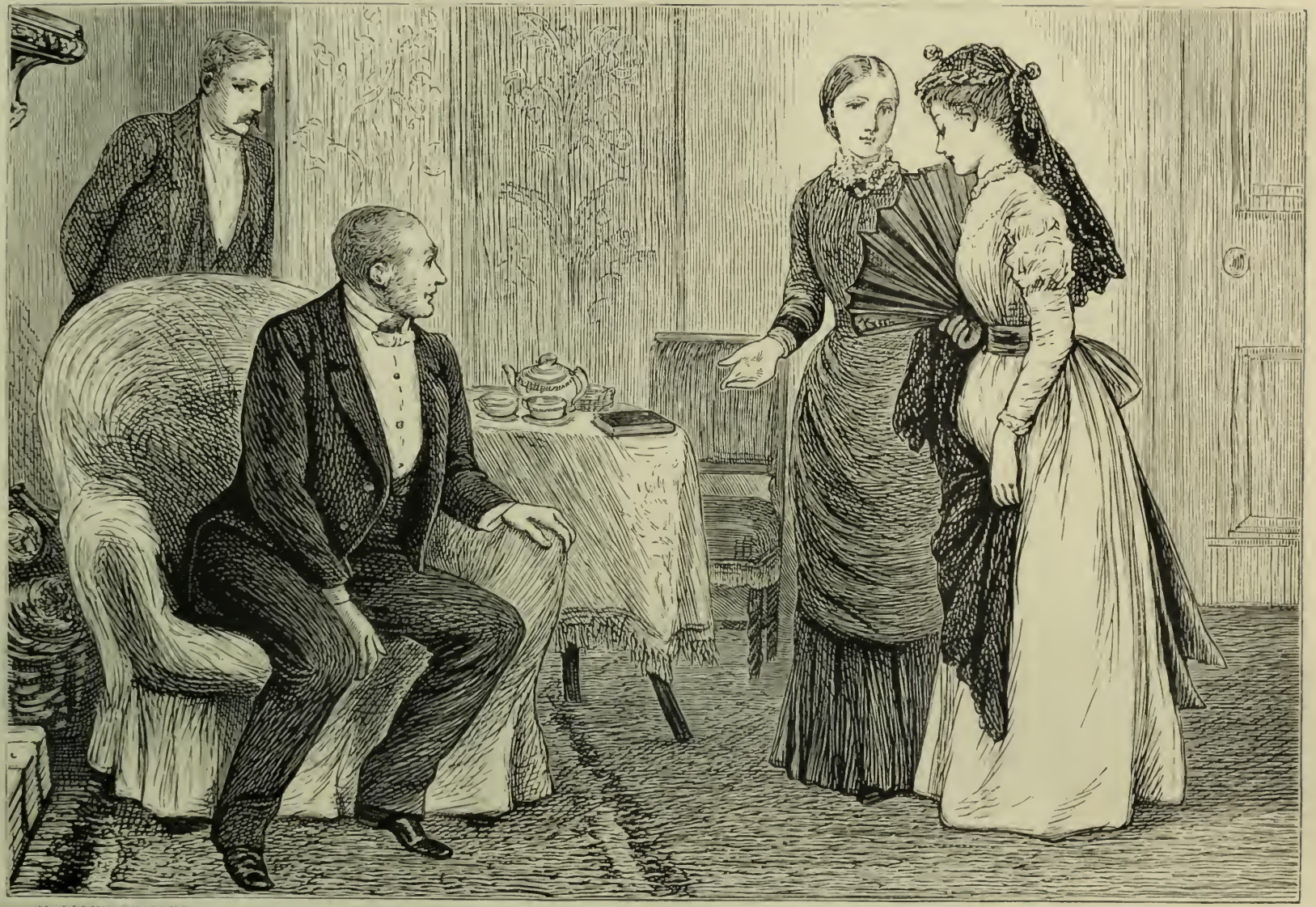
Till when at last there comes a lull, Belle rises gently from her place,
And calls her boys, and brave and full, looks up into the Colonel's face
To say good-bye: "I'm glad we've met; 'tis like a whiff of early life:
Please give, altho' we're strangers yet, your old friend's greeting to your wife!"

"My wife!" the Colonel drops her hand (they're good at blushing in Bengal!)
"I think you do not understand—my sister—not my wife at all!
But that's no matter; ere I go, I'll ask your leave to let me come
And call on you; I'd like to know my old friend's husband and her home."

Unconscious Rector! artless Jane! you little know the parts you played!
My wife begins to talk again; 'tis Belle's turn now to look dismayed.
"Belle, dear, your boys have scampered off—you'll see her, Colonel, thro' the lanes?
John, here, has such a nasty cough, and always these rheumatic pains."

My wife and I, we sat an hour, our guest came whistling thro' the hall,
He held a Christmas rose, the flower that blooms against the Rectory wall.
My wife looked up and met his eyes, I think she did not care to speak,
But rising, to my great surprise, on tip-toe, kissed the Colonel's cheek!

G. B. STUART.



M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

THE ARGOSY.

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THE WHITE WITCH.

CHAPTER IV.

TOO MANY FOR HIM.

THE new mistress of Croxham Abbey had just taken her seat in the brougham to be driven to Cheston, and her step-son was waiting to take his seat by her side, when Mr. Mayne came bustling out.

"I wonder, Laura," he said, "that you do not prefer the landau these hot afternoons, and have it open! You must find it close in this brougham."

Mrs. Mayne leaned forward to answer, a smile on her placid face. "I never care to use an open carriage, Henry, when I can have a close one. You get the dust, and you get the sun—and I am just a wee bit timid."

"And feel safer shut up, eh? Well, well, everybody to his taste. A pleasant journey to you. Get in, Godfrey."

They drove away; Mrs. Mayne talking to Godfrey. "By the by," she said, as they passed the Vicarage, "you are going out to-morrow afternoon, to Langskirk, are you not?"

"I don't know," he replied. "My father is going. Why?—do you want me to go?"—turning upon her suddenly.

"Well, to tell you the truth, little Elspeth Thornhill is coming; she has been teasing me to teach her to knit, so I told her to come in to-morrow afternoon. I thought you would be out, and that she would not be in your way. I can send her away before you come back."

"Now you are making me out to be more of a bear than I am," complained Godfrey. "I shall not go to Langskirk, and I shall make myself as agreeable as I can to both of you."

And Godfrey flattered himself that he had again rather disconcerted his step-mother. There was a short pause before she took up the conversation.

"I think those two girls are much nicer without their mother. She

seems to put a check upon them; in her presence they catch up her old-fashioned stiffness. She ought to let them go out more."

"I think their father has more to do with that than their mother. He thinks it a bad example to the parish for the parson's daughters to go gadding about."

"Indeed! It is a pity to spoil one's daughters' prospects for one's principles."

Godfrey looked up. "Don't you think principle more important than anything else?"

"Oh, of course it is. But if all parents' principles were as strict as that, girls would never get married at all."

"Mr. Thornhill would say it was better that all four of his daughters should die old maids than that one poor girl should be induced by their example to go to a tea-party to meet her 'young man'; especially if an aged and grumpy parent required her to stay and stir up his gruel at home," concluded Godfrey, solemnly.

Mrs. Mayne laughed. "But that is such nonsense, is it not? If he is so particular, Mrs. Thornhill ought to send them away for a week now and then to people who would take them out and about. She could tell the Vicar they went to nothing but missionary meetings."

"What, would you have her deceive her husband?"

"But it is such a little thing; and it would be all for the girls' good."

"Now I am surprised at you. Deliberately upholding the Jesuitical doctrine that one may do acknowledged evil that possible good may come! Why, don't you know that such teaching is dangerous?" Godfrey had spoken with burlesque gravity, but he listened to her answer with keen interest.

"I am not likely to do or say anything dangerous," said she, laughing in utter good faith. "I don't think it can be very wrong to work just a little crookedly for the sake of one's children."

With the last words, her tone grew so suddenly earnest that her voice shook. And to Godfrey, on the alert, this speech seemed laden with meaning.

Cheston was soon reached. "Let me see," began Mrs. Mayne: "You have some books to change at Smith's, and I have to telegraph to 'Swan and Edgar's.'"

"Can't I do that for you?"

"Thank you, no; it is not at all worth while. It is only"—seeing Godfrey look at her—"about a new mantle that was to have come yesterday."

"Nay, the mantle was not to come till to-morrow," returned Godfrey, who had an excellent memory for unimportant trifles which did not concern him.

"Yesterday," persisted she.

Godfrey said no more. He dutifully escorted her to the door of the telegraph-office, where she dismissed him. Then he went to the bookstall, bought a paper, gave a list of the books he wanted and said

he would return for them, and when he saw his step-mother coming out of the telegraph-office he slipped into it: one of the girls there had been a Croxham school-girl. He spoke to her.

"Mrs. Mayne has just sent off a telegram, but thinks she has left out a word. Just let me see the form a minute."

"I am afraid you can't see it now, sir."

"Oh, nonsense. You are not going to be so strict with me."

The girl gave him the form and he mastered its contents at a glance.

"Thank you; it is all right, after all," said he carelessly: and he left the office to rejoin his step-mother, who was now waiting for him at the bookstall.

"Where have you been, Godfrey?"

"Looking for you in the telegraph-office. Wonder how I managed to miss you?"

He hardly felt repaid for the trouble he had taken in tracking out this little mystery; for the telegram, which had brought him into Cheston in the stuffy brougham, was addressed to Miss Dixon at Dinan, and ran thus:

"Do not start until you hear again from me."

This was interesting, in that it awoke speculation as to the reason why it was worth while to telegraph at all, but it threw no light upon Mrs. Mayne's motives for wishing to defer or avoid altogether her daughter's visit. He put out a question on this subject on their way home.

"When is Miss Dixon coming to Croxham? Have you and my father settled it yet?"

"Nothing is settled yet," she answered rather quickly. "I should not wonder at Mary's refusing to come at all."

"Can't you manage it? You know how kind my father would be to her; and a girl is nowhere so safe as with her mother. It would be for her good: though I know you think a parent ought to make any effort for her child's sake, even to doing wrong."

Mrs. Mayne started palpably. "I will try," she said. "But Mary is so dreadfully reserved, and has been used to lead so quiet a life."

"Good gracious! you couldn't have anything much quieter than the Abbey or the life in it," said he, energetically. "Tell her that she may fancy herself a nun here: that she shall have the room which is built upon the exact spot where an erring brother was bricked up in the wall five centuries ago; and that I'll find out the secret passages which are supposed to exist, leading from the Abbey right under the river and into Cheston, so that she can withdraw herself quietly and unostentatiously from our midst whenever she finds the Abbey too noisy for her nerves."

They were nearing home when Mr. Wilding's gig met them, the same young woman seated in it with him who had looked so curiously at Mrs. Mayne in the morning at the Abbey entrance gate. Godfrey

nodded. The farmer touched his hat in response and his companion smiled.

Mrs. Mayne was sitting back in her corner. "Mr. Wilding, I think," she carelessly remarked. "Who was that with him?"

"His daughter," replied Godfrey. "Jane: the eldest of them all."

"I have never seen her about with them."

"Oh, she does not live at home. She came here on a short visit a few days back, and has been laid up ever since with a sore throat. Rather bad luck for her! She has not been at home for over three years, and she leaves again in a day or two."

"Where does she live, then?"

"In Wales. She is maid to a Mrs. Carradoc. The old lady goes on the Continent for months at a time, and Jane goes with her."

"Why is she in black? The Wildings are not."

"For some near relative of her mistress."

"You seem to be on very good terms with them, Godfrey!"

"Why, of course I am. I have been running in to the farmhouse at will since I was a little chap no higher than my knee.'

When Godfrey was by himself that evening, thinking over the incidents of the day, a new and disagreeable idea struck him: all these difficulties put in the way of Miss Dixon's coming might be but so many artifices of her mother to arouse his own interest, with the view of securing him as a husband for her insipid and unattractive daughter. As his own character for "turning round and going the other way" was well known, and Mrs. Mayne was avowedly capable of resorting to stratagem for a daughter's benefit, this explanation of the matter was not outside the bounds of probability.

On the following afternoon, it was the feeling that she would have preferred to see him start for the agricultural show at Langskirk with his father which prompted this perverse young man to stay at home, and to saunter into the drawing-room soon after he heard the arrival of Elspeth Thornhill, and condescend to do his best to prove to his step-mother that he was anything but unsociable when he chose. It is true that it did not require much effort to amuse little Elspeth; her timid laugh came readily enough in acknowledgment of the very feeblest effort of wit on the part of the idle young man in the chair by her side. Neither was there, perhaps, any great merit in the obliging readiness he showed to pick up her knitting-cotton when she let the ball roll along the floor, or in his insensibility to fatigue while holding the skein on his fingers for her to wind. For her simple, perhaps even silly, face was very young and fair, her soft hair looked golden where the sunlight fell on it; her blue eyes were very innocent, and her mouth, however much it might pout in the serene but not enlivening atmosphere of home, was all smiles at the attentions of the brilliant Godfrey.

When Mr. Mayne returned from Langskirk and the delighted girl was pressed to stay for dinner, Godfrey supported the further infliction

of her insipid society very well. And after dinner, although he was really fond of music, in more than the accepted sense of the term, he listened to a maddening "Mazourke de Salon" and to a brilliant March, with no outward show of irritation. Then she played, in wrong time, a Spanish Bolero, with a tinkling effect on the upper notes of the piano in imitation of castanets, which took old Mr. Mayne's fancy. And there followed a talk about Spanish dances and Spanish beauties in which the elder gentleman upheld the cause of English loveliness warmly.

"Dark-eyed fiddlesticks!" said he, cutting short an expostulation from his son. "Just because you young fellows have seen pictures of women with high combs in their hair and lace shawls round their heads and fans in their hands, called 'An Andalusian Lady,' and because you have heard a lot about 'The Rose of Castile' and 'Juanita,' you think Spanish women must be handsomer than your own countrywomen. But it is all nonsense. The beauty lies in the lace and the fan: take those away, and you have a brown-skinned, thick-lipped woman not fit to compare with one of our everyday pretty English girls."

But Godfrey, who had never been to Spain, was hot in defence of brunette loveliness, and got quite eloquent in his praises of the grace and charm of Southern women. While they were in discussion, Mrs. Mayne quietly rang the bell for her maid, and gave some directions to her. She reappeared in a few minutes with a black lace shawl and some other things. Mrs. Mayne took them; and, beckoning Elspeth to the end of the room, she proceeded to fasten the lace most becomingly round her fair head with gold-headed pins; and then placing a big, black fan in the girl's obedient hand, with one corner held coquettishly before the mouth, she led her forward and turned her blushing little face towards the gentlemen.

Elspeth, fair as a blush-rose, smiling and shy, looked bewitching. Mr. Mayne, enraptured at this illustration of the truth of his argument, gazed at her in admiration and triumph. Godfrey stroked his fair moustache and looked at her sideways, without triumph, but with perhaps more admiration still.

Mrs. Mayne glanced at him curiously and furtively. But at that moment he did not notice her. He was thinking of something else.

Then Elspeth, a little confused by the attention she was exciting, put her hand up to her head to take out the pins; but Mr. Mayne would not let her take the lace off.

"Come for a walk in the garden, and I will gather you a rose to complete the picture," said he. "Spanish ladies are always represented with a rose in their hair." But his wife gave him a meaning look, which he understood.

"Or stay," said he, "I am getting old for a cavalier, and I am rather afraid of the damp. Godfrey shall take my place, and pluck you the handsomest rose in the garden."

Godfrey obeyed without a murmur. The young people left the room, and the elder ones sat smiling and nodding at each other.

Mr. Mayne thought he had done something very clever; and that it was especially pleasing to his wife. "If that does not overcome his objection to matrimony, I don't know what will," cried he, triumphantly.

Unfortunately for their wishes, Godfrey's momentary enthusiasm, at the transformation of the Elspeth of every day into a beauty of romance was just sufficiently damped by his father's transparent generalship as to render that evening walk free from danger to him. It was a pleasant stroll enough, though, for both of them: for Godfrey, who thought how bewitchingly pretty a girl's eyes look when the daylight is going, and when you have to bend your head to see her face clearly; for Elspeth, mad to have a real lover, like those in the novels, which she and Matilda could only read by stealth, lest they should be seen by the Vicar.

They walked up and down the paths, talking of nothing in particular, which was the sort of conversation at which Elspeth was best. They decided that the air was cool, that the grass was wet, that the roses were sweet and that she would have a red one. So Godfrey crossed the grass to the bed where the finest roses grew, gathered two and brought them to her, telling her to choose. So she chose one and he fastened it in her hair close to the lace, and resisted with a little difficulty the impulse to kiss her. Then he said he would keep the second rose in memory of—this evening.

There ensued a pause; and she, being modest and inexperienced, suggested that they should go in. And Godfrey, again resisting a temptation, said yes, they had better. So they went in, apart and self-possessed, and Mrs. Mayne's face clearly fell at sight of them.

"By Jove, I had a narrow escape, though," was Godfrey's last distinct reflection before sleeping.

There was a grand flower-show at Cheston the following day. Unluckily a discourse on "The Home Duties of Women" was to be given in a neighbouring parish on that day by a celebrated preacher; and Mrs. Thornhill, who practised her duty to husband and children much better than the celebrated preacher's wife, thought it incumbent upon her to go and hear him. Matilda and Elspeth were in despair. Of course the first day of the show was the only one on which they would appear at it; the suggestion that they should go on the second day was received by them with the scorn it deserved.

"Why, the entrance is only a shilling, and there will be nothing but nursemaids," moaned Elspeth.

"And the flowers will all be dead," said Matilda, as a happy thought, looking at her father.

He felt rather sorry for them. Flowers were his hobby; and though he had a shrewd suspicion that the sudden enthusiasm of his daughters concerning them was not an unmixed passion, he allowed himself to be talked round into mildly protesting acquiescence when he

heard that Mrs. Mayne had offered to chaperon them. He liked Mrs. Mayne, but was shrewd enough not quite to trust her. Besides, he did not much care for his daughters to appear in public without their mother; and although he had, of course, only heard an edition revised for family use of Elspeth's visit to the Abbey, he did not want Godfrey, of whose indolent, useless, though harmless habits he disapproved, to come more in contact with the two girls than was necessary.

Elspeth was in a flutter of delight. Since the excitement of the evening before, of that sweet taste of admiration when she was "dressed-up"—an incident which had not reached the Vicar's ears, of that more dangerous sensation when, in the garden, Godfrey's hands had touched her hair, and she had heard, for the first time, a young man's voice shaking a little as it addressed her, she had been restless, discontented, petulant, feverishly unable to settle to anything. Her eyes turned in the direction of the Abbey, whose red gables one could see between the trees of the Vicarage garden, a hundred times in the course of the morning.

As for Godfrey, he was naturally a prey to no such violent excitement; nevertheless, he, too, looked forward with some sort of languid interest to another meeting with the girl who had fascinated him for an hour the night before. So that when the landau, containing himself and his step-mother, drove up to the Vicarage, and the girls, in ambitious new gowns made at home and bearing too evident traces of the influence of a fashion-book, came out, radiant with excitement, he decided that Elspeth's face was certainly calculated to bear even daylight inspection.

In the tent, appropriated to the show, they all kept well together, and inspected the flowers in slow, deliberate fashion. Then the band began to play in a large marquee, and then it was that Mrs. Mayne committed an act which justified the Vicar's objections to her chaperonage.

In the marquee they met some cousins of the Thornhills, and Mrs. Mayne encouraged Matilda to join their party for a time; then she took a seat to listen to the music, and told Godfrey and Elspeth to walk about and look at what they liked, and they would find her in the same spot on their return. No sooner had they availed themselves of this permission than Mrs. Mayne, glancing around, saw the eyes of that same young woman in black gazing at her under cover of some intervening foliage.

Jane Wilding was seated by her cousin, Mrs. Caird. Caird, the florist, was one of the largest of the exhibitors, and could command the entrance of his wife and a friend or two to the show. Suddenly, Mrs. Caird also espied Mrs. Mayne.

"Look, Jane," she said, "yonder is the new lady at the Abbey. See! the one in the white bonnet and veil. Mr. Mayne met her somewhere abroad and married her off-hand, it's said. She was a Mrs. Dixon. But I expect you have heard all about it at home."

"What did you say her name was?" returned Jane Wilding quickly. "Dixon!"

"Yes. Mrs. Dixon. Why? Did you ever know her when you were abroad?"

"No," carelessly replied Jane. "I never knew any Mrs. Dixon."

She turned the conversation to something else: and the band struck up again.

When Godfrey and his companion came back to the place where they had left Mrs. Mayne, she was nowhere to be seen. They looked for her, in the crowd and out of it. Elspeth was anxious; Godfrey took it coolly.

"She is sure to come back here soon," said he. "Let us sit down and listen to the music."

They sat down, and at first the time passed not unpleasantly. But when Mrs. Mayne did not return, poor Elspeth began to get nervous and uneasy as she saw the people she knew look at her, surprised, as she fancied, to see her so long with no companion but Godfrey. She was very young and very innocent, unused to the world, and her parents were very strict. So she did the most unwise thing she could do, by insisting that they should go into the grounds and look for Mrs. Mayne. Godfrey entered a protest; but the tears were evidently so near to her pretty blue eyes that he gave way, and they started upon what he felt was a wild-goose chase.

The consequence was that they did not meet Mrs. Mayne and Matilda until nearly an hour after the time at which they had promised to be back at home.

"I can't think how it happened, dear child. I only went outside for a few minutes with Mrs. Mansfield, and then we walked about listening to the music. I thought you must have joined your cousins, and gave up looking for you. Never mind: we will make haste home, now: you won't be very late, after all."

But when, after taking the girls home, Mrs. Mayne drove to the Abbey with Godfrey, she broke into a grievance against the Vicar's wife:

"She makes quite an absurd fuss about trifles! You saw what a fever of anxiety she was in because they were late. If the girls are silly enough to tell her about our missing each other, Elspeth will get as severe a lecture as if she had done something wicked."

"I hope Elspeth will tell, though," said Godfrey, drily. "Women should be straightforward. If I had the misfortune to marry a girl who was perpetually telling me small stories, I really think I should beat her."

"She would tell you big ones after that," said Mrs. Mayne, placidly.

And if he had had any intention of confounding her by this speech, Godfrey must have felt that he had signally failed.

At dinner, Mr. Mayne, who had not cared to go to the flower-show, asked them full particulars. Mrs. Mayne praised the beauty

of the girls they had met there; Godfrey disparaged it. They looked both beautiful and good, she said. Upon which, Godfrey made a remark that displeased his father.

"Godfrey, remember what you are saying. You are talking as if beauty were more important than goodness!"

"Well, is it not so?" returned he, glancing at his step-mother. "But as you are both beautiful and good, Mrs. Mayne, the matter cannot affect you, whichever way we settle it. I suppose you are both privately thinking of my choosing one of these young ladies. Of course I must put her beauty foremost. If I were a poor clerk, or a linendraper's assistant, it would be different; I would then fix my well-regulated affections on the plain but thrifty eldest daughter of ten, as the most important thing would be that my wife should be a thrifty housekeeper. As it is, the chief point is that she should please me; I can afford to dispense with the moral and useful virtues, on condition that she makes it up in charm."

His father took this speech as an unkind joke at his step-mother's expense. "Godfrey is only laughing at you," said he.

"Laughing, am I," murmured Godfrey, but without excitement, as he withdrew. "It will be no laughing matter if Madame ma belle-mère disposes of me against my will."

He fell to thinking of Elspeth, the simple little companion he had taken care of that day, with pleasure though without enthusiasm. He had enjoyed the bright happiness in Elspeth's fair face at first, he had been touched by her simple-minded distress later. But her naïve coquetry had no piquancy, her ill-humour even less, and her liking for himself was not strong enough to prove by itself an attraction.

Whether Matilda herself had come off so safely is open to question. To judge by the tears she shed in her room that night one might have thought her peace of mind was gone for ever. But whether all this emotion was because the day's pleasure was over, and to-morrow the dull routine of practising and wrangling with one's sisters must go on again, or because the Vicar had said that the girls must not go out again with the Abbey people, it would have been hard to decide. The story of the day's adventures had now been told; it angered Mr. Thornhill; it angered his wife and upset her calculations. For when she had allowed herself to dream the desirable dream of having a daughter safely settled as prospective mistress of the Abbey, it was Matilda, not Elspeth. Matilda, with her energetic temper and sarcastic tongue, would be the very wife to rule the Abbey's indolent heir. And now, with that blind indifference to the fitness of things and their own best interests which young men always showed, he appeared to be turning his thoughts to Elspeth.

Mrs. Thornhill, with a mother's marrying eye, had observed certain signs in this young man's conduct which led her to doubt whether

he had any serious thoughts yet on the all-important subject of religion. The Abbey pew and the Vicarage pew faced each other close to the chancel in Croxham church; and, against her will, Mrs. Thornhill could not help noticing an indifference as to whether his prayer-book was right side up or upside down, a tendency to kneel with his hands reverently clasped, but with his head laid upon them in such a manner that he could scrutinise the vagaries of the school-children, with an aspect of negligence towards the parson, as if he didn't know what was going on and didn't care. These defects, and a certain irreverent way of looking about him as if the communion-rails were no more than park palings, and his fellow-worshippers merely people to be stared at, a mother could not ignore; especially when things seemed to be going the contrary way instead of the straight one.

But if the young man was not exceptionally good, he was not exceptionally wicked. It is true he was given to slouch about with his shoulders lifted, and to read French novels, and to smoke a great deal more than was proper; but in character and habits he was bright and clear as the day.

Mrs. Thornhill made her way to Elspeth's little room that night, intending to question her: Godfrey was attractive; there was no doubt of that. She was not very successful; for when she had soothed the girl into drying her tears and had felt her way to the question whether she cared about Mr. Godfrey Mayne, all that the simple little creature could say in answer was: "I don't know." On the whole, Mrs. Thornhill decided that the impression made upon the easily-reached heart was not yet dangerously strong, and she resolved that it should have no chance, if she could prevent it, of getting stronger.

But there was a woman's will more stubborn than hers at work against her.

The next day at luncheon, which Godfrey and his step-mother were taking alone, she said she had called at the Vicarage, and found the girls were under punishment for the affair of yesterday.

"Put upon bread and water?" remarked Godfrey, lightly.

"Mr. Thornhill and his wife are both very angry with them."

"Nonsense!"

"Well, they are so. With Elspeth especially. Both the girls are ordered not to—well, I really believe not to speak to you again. Of course you will not care a straw about that. Poor little Elspeth had cried till her eyes were red—and it truly was no fault of hers."

"What a shame!" commented Godfrey.

From one of the windows of the Abbey drawing-room there was an uninterrupted view across a wide hay-field of the enclosure attached to the Vicarage garden where the girls played lawn-tennis. Sitting at her busy pretence of needlework after luncheon, Mrs. Mayne saw Godfrey get over the low iron railing which divided the Abbey garden

from the hay-field, saunter leisurely in that direction and join the group of figures there. She had risen from her seat and watched him from behind the blind, her fingers tapping nervously on the window-sill, until he disappeared.

When Godfrey approached the enclosure where Matilda, Elspeth, Annette and Arthur were playing lawn-tennis, the first impulse of at least two of the party had evidently been flight. But Matilda preserved a show of decency by telling them to go on playing, and, with a rather strained smile, went to the railing to speak to him. Elspeth slowly followed and shook hands with an uncomfortable blush. The unabashed Godfrey accepted readily the half-invitation Matilda felt bound to make, vaulted over the railing, and talked to the girls. Presently a maid came from the house calling to Matilda that her mamma wanted her, and Godfrey was left tête-à-tête with Elspeth. The two young ones, with an inspiration that they would find it more amusing to watch Elspeth and Mr. Godfrey from behind trees than to stay and share in the conversation, ran off at once.

The talk suddenly flagged. Even if a man is not deeply attached to a girl, the feeling that, although by no fault of his own, she has been in trouble on his account, can scarcely fail to rouse a passing interest in his mind. And when he can see the traces of that trouble in fair cheeks a little paler, blue eyes a little heavier, the interest may spring up for the moment into something very keen indeed.

"I am afraid you got over-tired yesterday. You look pale," said he, after a short pause.

The colour flushed into her face. She hoped he did not guess that she had been crying about him.

"Yes, I was rather tired," said she, smiling nervously, without looking pleased.

"It was not my fault, you know," he said, trying to look into her eyes, which she kept down. "I kept wanting you to sit down and rest, did I not? But you would walk about ——"

"Don't talk about it, please," said she, looking up at last, her lips quivering. "You don't know how angry papa was because we were so late, and—and because we enjoyed ourselves so much. He says we go out too often, and we must not think so much about enjoying ourselves, and that we are never to go out without mamma again."

"But he doesn't mean that. Next month we are going to see a polo match at Keighley, and he will let you go to it with us."

"Oh, no, I am sure he will not: you don't know what he said. He will never let us go out with Mrs. Mayne again; he said so. He said that you and she ——"

"Well, what did he say about her and me?"

"I mean ——"

"Well? Something unkind, I suppose."

"Not exactly unkind, but ——"

"And did you say it too?"

"Oh, no."

"But you said something else that was unkind about me?"

"No, no, no; indeed I didn't!"

"Nothing unkind at all? You did not say, for instance, that I was a bore, and that you were thankful never to have to listen any more to my dull and tedious talk?"

Elspeth looked full at him, her eyes and mouth round with astonishment. A tinge of pink colour had come back to her cheeks; under her garden hat her face looked lovely.

"Oh, no, I never thought of such a thing! Who has been telling you such stories?"

"It does not matter; if you are quite sure they are stories."

"Yes, they are indeed. How can you think I should be so ungrateful, when you were so kind, and I enjoyed myself so much!"

"Did you enjoy yourself, then?"

"Oh, yes, until I got frightened. More than I ever enjoyed myself in my life, I think."

"I am very glad of that. I—I enjoyed myself too," in a lower voice.

"But you always can when you like. Your amusements don't depend, as mine do, on whether papa can find a sermon and a text to fit each other, as Matilda says. Your pleasure depends on yourself." She was twisting her foot about in the grass impatiently. The little show of petulance became her.

Godfrey laid his hand on the railing, close to hers. He wanted the pretty blue eyes to look up and meet his again.

"No, it doesn't. My pleasure depends on ——"

"On what?" She did look up, bright-eyed, innocent, wholly happy again, charmed and fluttered by the turn the talk had taken.

"On—on you."

His hand had closed on hers and he had kissed her, just as Mrs. Thornhill came up to them from the house. She looked aghast for a moment, then her face cleared as she glanced at happy, blushing Elspeth, and she gave Godfrey her hand cordially.

"Mr. Godfrey, this has made me very happy."

"I was coming in presently to—to see the Vicar."

What did a lie more or less matter now? He was in for it, and the less he said about the unforeseen nature of the blow which had fallen on him the better. For he repented the act as soon as he had committed it.

"She and my step-mother have been too many for me," thought poor Godfrey. "Anyway, Elspeth is not to blame, and she shan't suffer. I must do the suffering."

The interview with Mr. Thornhill was satisfactory. He said they were both very young, and matrimony was not a thing to be rushed into. This sentiment had the ardent wooer's cordial approbation. The Vicar added that he did not expect every man to be as deliber-

ate as himself, seeing that he was nearly forty before he took the plunge; and although Godfrey felt that he could have borne a similar delay as a Christian should, he made a becoming display of impatience at the idea.

He then left the Vicar's presence, and after tea in the drawing-room with the ladies of the family, enjoyed a duly authorised tête-à-tête with Elspeth under the trees in the garden, which not even the numbing effect of the parental sanction could deprive entirely of its charm. They had a picturesque parting, and Godfrey kissed her pretty and blushing face with momentary fervour.

Mrs. Mayne was alone in the drawing-room. "Where have you been, Godfrey?" she asked. "Your father has been wanting you."

"I have been to the Vicarage."

"The Vicarage! After what I told you! I wonder you had the courage. Did you see the Vicar?"

"Yes, I saw the Vicar."

"And what did he say?"

"He said: 'Bless you my children!'"

"Godfrey! What do you mean?"

"That I am going to have him for a new papa, and Mrs. Thornhill for a new mamma. And I think"—looking at her steadfastly—"that you can guess who has been the happy instrument in bringing about all this."

"You are going to marry Elspeth?—Matilda? Which is it?"

"Well, I think you may guess that also.—Is my father in the library? I will go to him."

No sooner had he left the room than Mrs. Mayne hastened up stairs to her own. There, with a smiling face, she wrote out a short telegram to be despatched to Dinan.

CHAPTER V.

THE THUNDER-STORM.

Mr. Mayne was delighted to hear of the engagement to Elspeth. It was not, perhaps, quite the best match his son could have made; but the Thornhills were of very good family, and Godfrey could afford to dispense with fortune in his wife; and Elspeth herself was a charmingly pretty and innocent little girl; and Mrs. Mayne had contrived to so greatly imbue him with the idea that Godfrey ought to marry somebody that he could but be pleased.

"But I know you brought it about, Laura," said he, admiringly. "You must confess that. And now where are we to look for a husband for Mary?" added he, ingenuously letting out the open secret that he had had designs on her for his son.

"You will waste your time in trying," replied his wife, gently. "Mary does not care for admiration or attention; and I really believe she means, what all girls are fond of saying, that she will never

marry. She likes to talk to men who are grave and old and serious, and I think she considers men of her own age rather frivolous and uninteresting."

"I ought to have had an answer from her before this," said Mr. Mayne. "I got a curious letter from the clergyman this morning, you know, saying that Miss Dixon's plans were still undecided. But that is nonsense; if I don't hear in a day or two from her to say she is coming, I shall go and fetch her myself."

"Mary will be sure to write in a day or two," said Mrs. Mayne.

And she proved a true prophet. Two or three days afterwards Mr. Mayne did receive a letter from his step-daughter, thanking him for the kindness of his offer, and saying that in obedience to his wishes, she would start for England as soon as she possibly could, but she had some trifling matters to arrange first.

Godfrey found that being engaged suited him very well; it gave him all the light occupation he wanted: a new place to be idle in, an object for a stroll of just the right length, and a pretty girl to talk to. Happily Elspeth was too inexperienced and too unexacting to demand much ardour from her lover. Matilda indeed tried to sting her sister into a show of jealousy and an outburst of spirit: but then, Matilda was jealous, Elspeth thought.

"You should make him do something to show he is in love with you," said the elder sister, who had come to brush her hair in Elspeth's room one night, in order to stir her up to a little coquetry. "He treats you as if he were a sultan who had thrown the handkerchief to some poor little slave. You should get him to walk to Cheston in the hot sun to do some errand for you, or you should forbid him to smoke when he is in the garden with you."

"What nonsense, Matilda! As if you, who have never been engaged at all, could know better how to treat him than I do! If I were to ask him to go to Cheston he certainly would not go until the sun had gone down; he would say it was ridiculous to ask him. And if I were to tell him not to smoke out of doors, he would stay at home and smoke there."

"Well, if I were you I should let him."

"And lose him altogether! You talk as if we two girls were great beauties, Matilda; or very rich. Now that I have got one lover, I shall not be so silly as to try to send him away."

"What will you do if he goes away of his own accord?"

"He won't go, if I let him do what he likes."

"Oh, won't he! You have not any knowledge of the world."

"No, of course I haven't. Nor have you."

"I know that a man gets tired of a girl if she is the same to him always. She should try him a little now and then."

"I dare say! Well, I was cross yesterday, when he spilt the coffee down my dress, and then he talked to you and wouldn't speak to me, and I made up my mind not to be petulant again. If Godfrey

had wanted somebody to say cross things, he would have chosen you ; but he didn't, you see."

"Well, don't let us quarrel, Elspeth. I did not want to tease you really."

A few days later came the day fixed on for the annual school-treat. The Vicar's daughters pretended to consider it a great bore, although in truth they enjoyed the little excitement as much as the youngest of the school-children.

There were long tables and forms from the school-house placed under the trees in the field, between the Abbey and the Vicarage, from which the hay had just been carted away. Here the children assembled to enjoy the delicious amusement of running races for halfpence on a sultry July day ; and when they had had enough of that invigorating exercise, the real business of the entertainment began : tea. Trays full of currant bread were brought forth, buns, piles of bread-and-butter ; self-sacrificing ladies presided at the tea-trays. This part of the day's work, being by far the most interesting to the untutored minds of the children, was dragged out over an amazingly long period, considering the rapid rate at which both tea and buns, and currant bread disappeared. That over, the teachers and grown-up people sat down to eat and drink in a more civilised manner at the tables, and the children were again chivied into undesired activity by the well-meaning organisers of races and games.

Elspeth was one of the feeblest of the organisers, therefore one of the most popular. Godfrey contented himself with supplying the halfpence.

"This tiresome little boy won't run!" exclaimed she piteously, giving a fat child of about seven a gentle push to incite him to healthful exercise. "I've started him in half a dozen races, but he always comes back after a few steps. What is your name? Why don't you run, little boy?"

"Perhaps he can't," suggested Godfrey, as they both stooped to examine this remarkable child. "I don't think I could if I had eaten as much as he has. Can't you think of some amusement for them more—more intellectual, and less—less muscular, until they have a little got over the effects of the light refreshment?"

"Oh, how silly you are, Godfrey," exclaimed Elspeth, laughing at his real or pretended ignorance. "There isn't anything they can do but run. Intellectual amusement! Why, don't you know that in the schools they are obliged to teach them just like parrots? We always do this at the treats. When they are tired of running we make them eat, and when they are tired of eating—that is, when there isn't any more left—we make them run again. That is the only way to amuse school-children.——Is that thunder?" she asked suddenly, with a start.

"Yes, it is," answered Godfrey. "I thought we should have a storm, and here it comes."

The gathering clouds grew darker rapidly. Faint lightning flashes were followed by distant peals of thunder, and the first few drops of rain fell. The storm was upon them, almost without warning. Some of the children were being led towards the school-house, which was some distance off. The rest were huddled together under the thick branches of the elms, and among them stood Elspeth, with Godfrey by her side.

"Elspeth, Elspeth, you must come home," called her mother, espying the reluctant girl. "You will get wet through. Come at once. Make haste."

"I will come round to the Vicarage this evening if I don't find you about here," said Godfrey.

She ran off. The Thornhill party had not got home before the rain came down in a blinding sheet of water. Godfrey was still standing idly with his back against the tree, when a bright glare of lightning, followed quickly by a loud thunder-crash, startled the poor children round him and made the little girls scream. This tree was at a very short distance from the Abbey. Godfrey looked at the little ones.

"Here, children; follow me to the Abbey: quick, or you'll be drenched," said he. And snatching up a small howling thing of three or four, who thought he was the thunder and thumped him for his trouble, he made for the house through the pouring rain.

He burst open the front door, hustled the children in, and set down his small burden with a remonstrance for her ingratitude. Then he shouted for Hawkins; but that gentleman, being timid, always locked himself up in the cellar during the storm, and therefore did not appear. The maids had shut themselves in the servants' hall and were busy with the cook, who was in hysterics. Godfrey looked at his flock, wondering what he should do with them. There were eight or ten of them, boys and girls. Then he led the way to the breakfast-room, opened the door, and told them to go in. They obeyed, but they had scarcely got inside when, just as he was going to shut the door upon them, there came another vivid flash of lightning, and the children, howling and screaming with all their might, rushed out and surrounded him, and clung to him in inarticulate terror. He wished he had not been so impulsively benevolent.

"What the deuce is the matter with the little idiots?" he muttered. "Go back again, you silly children, there is nothing to be afraid of."

"There's a witch in there!" they screamed, sobbing in terrified alarm. "She is all in white. Oh, sir, save us from her! It is a white witch!"

Godfrey, somewhat puzzled at this, opened the door again, and went in himself. As he entered, a double flash lit up the room; and standing before him in the blue and blinding glare was a slight figure with a ghastly face and large weird dark eyes, dressed all in white.

With the sick, faint feeling that a shock of surprise in the midst of excitement sometimes gives, Godfrey turned back suddenly, without

knowing what he did. He hardly knew what it was he saw. She looked as much like a ghostly witch as anything. But some soft gentle words from her arrested him.

"I beg your pardon. I am Mary Dixon."

He held out his hand with some confused apology. Her touch gave him another shock; it was quite cold on his hot fingers. She seemed frightened herself. Godfrey rang the bell, consigned the terrified children to a servant, and stayed talking with Miss Dixon about her journey, her arrival and the storm, until his step-mother re-entered the room. He had had time to notice that the white dress, which had made the slight, pale, delicate stranger look so ghastly in the blue lightning-glare, was only a dressing-gown of Mrs. Mayne's, put on because her daughter's travelling-dress had got wet. He was utterly ashamed of the fright her first appearance had given him, but when he got to his room to dress for dinner he found that his hands were shaking, that his face was still white and wet.

"Confound the girl!" said he. "She has made a fool of me. Seems rather bad luck, though, for her arrival here to have been inaugurated by this awful thunder-storm!"

CHAPTER VI.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

DURING the first week of Miss Dixon's stay at the Abbey, Godfrey did not find her improve on acquaintance. She was distant with him, unsociable, in manner almost repellant. Purposely so, he thought. At the week's end, something happened which turned the balance in his mind entirely against her.

She occupied the chamber which, in the old days when there were children about the Abbey, had been given to the governess. Godfrey thought a more appropriate room for the grave, well-informed, silent young lady could not have been found; but he soon changed his opinion. This room opened by one door into the corridor, but by another into the old school-room; which Godfrey used as his smoking-room. Mr. Mayne, finding that his step-daughter liked solitude, as became a person of her studious habits, suggested that the school-room should be given up to her as a sitting-room. His wife rather ostensibly pointed out that Godfrey used it; but Mr. Mayne said Godfrey could have the old refectory downstairs to smoke in. And so it was decided. This would remove Godfrey altogether from that part of the upper floor; he would now have no special business there; his own chamber being at the very opposite end of the long corridor. But, despite Mrs. Mayne's ostensible protest, Godfrey had a suspicion that it was she who had suggested it to his father—and he did not like it.

"Smoke in the refectory!" he grumbled mentally. "He should not smoke in the refectory; a large, bare, desolate, draughty place

where any sort of comfort was impossible. The school-room was just the place that suited him; it was small, cosy and cheerful; it had been his den for years; and he could watch from its window what was going on in the Wildings' farmyard. And now he must give it up, without any sort of acknowledgment, to a person he didn't like; in fact to a person he disliked; a prim, dull, cold, uninteresting girl who did her best to make him forget that she had even the merit of being young! Even her own mother, warm-hearted, affectionate as she was, did not seem to care very much about her. And who was to know when her visit would end?" Godfrey began to feel that Miss Dixon weighed upon his spirits.

"She can't even play!" thought he, as a final grievance. Though he grumbled at the playing of every girl he knew, and was always first in the common outcry against the piano as an instrument of torture, yet he was so fond of music that a woman who made no pretence to this ordinary accomplishment had hardly, he considered, a claim to any of the privileges of her sex. One of those privileges, his own society and conversation, he therefore considered himself entitled to withhold, as far as bare civility allowed—perhaps even farther—from Miss Dixon.

On Miss Dixon's part, as Godfrey took no pains to amuse or conciliate her, but rather returned her coldness with interest, she set him down as a dull, ill-tempered young man, who knew nothing of good manners and ought to be taught them.

But the prejudice against her was not confined to Godfrey. The story of the fright her appearance had given to the school-children, with many distortions and exaggerations, had spread like wild-fire. The name they had given to the young lady in their terror clung to her, and raised a barrier against her in the ignorant and superstitious minds of the village people. This grew stronger when it became known that fever had broken out in a low-lying district of the parish on the very day of her arrival. The feeling was so strong that her assistance both in the Sunday-school and in the district-visiting had to be declined upon whatever excuses came first. Mr. Thornhill, remonstrate with his silly flock as he would, could make no impression; the villagers would not have the young lady at the Abbey—the White Witch—to visit their cottages or teach their children.

Whether Miss Dixon guessed at the existence of this unreasonable dislike of her, it was impossible to tell. The occupations of active benevolence being denied to her, she gave herself up to such pleasures as belong to solitude. She read a good deal, delighting Mr. Mayne by the pleasure she took in the long-neglected volumes in his library, a sacred place which Godfrey had always taken pains to keep out of. She took long walks by herself, returning with her hands full of bits of moss, stones and twigs overgrown with lichen, flowering grasses, and a hundred other treasures of the woods and lanes.

The girl had indeed sore need of such pleasures as did not depend

on human caprice, for old Mr. Mayne remained her only friend. The reasons why she did not become a favourite with her equals in Croxham and the neighbourhood were more difficult to discover: it may have lain in her reserve. Had her face but possessed a little healthy bloom, it would have been lovely, but the death-like paleness was always there. Her eyes were large and brown and luminous, and the very long and dark lashes that shaded them made them look black, especially by candle-light. Her voice was low and sweet.

She presented a contrast to Mrs. Mayne. The people who had so quickly warmed to her, fair, plump and smiling, had been ready to welcome heartily a younger and fairer bearer of the same attractions; but this slight, wan daughter with grave face, and quiet, repressed manners disappointed them, and she had to pay the penalty.

There was a difference of opinion, too, between the ladies and the gentlemen about her, for which she had to suffer. The latter declared her to be beautiful. Two other charms which she undoubtedly possessed were rare among the girls of that part of the world: she had a most graceful walk and she dressed well. When Miss Dixon first arrived she was without her luggage, which had been lost on the journey; for a fortnight she was dependent upon her travelling-dress and her mother's wardrobe. But when her lost trunks appeared on a certain Saturday, and she came down the following morning dressed for church in white cashmere, artistically embroidered with wild roses and ivy, Mr. Mayne was electrified. Even Godfrey's admiration was taken by storm.

But her dress did not please the ladies at church. One and all discovered that she was over-dressed, that such a costume might be all very well in Bond Street, but in the country it was absurd. She looked like an actress, said one lady, whose daughters all wore light dresses and black cloth jackets, muslin ties, and white straw hats trimmed with black velvet. Elspeth's litany was a long wail for deliverance from rivals in Parisian toilettes, and to her the sermon was on the same heading. It seemed to her excited fancy that Godfrey's attention did not wander from his own pew so much as usual, and he certainly was maddeningly careful in coming out that his companion's pretty gown should not get caught in the door. He joined his fiancée at the church-door, as in duty bound.

"Do you like that dress?" asked Elspeth of him in the churchyard.

"That white one?" asked Godfrey, with proper indifference. "Yes, I think it very pretty. Don't you?"

"I think it would be pretty at a garden-party. It is too much for every day."

"I don't think a woman's dress can be too pretty for every day," said Godfrey, with more warmth than he had meant to put into his tone. It was a subject which interested him. "As long as it is not inappropriate to her occupations, her dress cannot be too beautiful."

"Then you must like Miss Dixon more than me," broke out Elspeth unreasonably.

"My dear Elspeth, that has nothing to do with it."

"Well, you must admire her dresses more than mine," amended she, querulously.

That was unquestionable, but he saw that it would not do to admit it. He instantly professed to admire her frocks, made by the Swiss maid from patterns in the fashion journal, and covered with curious vagaries in ill-matched trimming, contrasting with the costly simplicity of that other one. He went back to luncheon with a new interest; he was less churlish than he had been since her arrival. He begged her to take strawberries; he offered to get her a book that was mentioned, which she said she should like to read. Miss Dixon did not care for strawberries; she had too much on her hands to begin a new book just yet. Godfrey did not allow the possibility of her wishing to snub him, even with such advantages as her charming appearance gave her.

He admitted that in that get-up she looked charming, wondered he had not noticed before how delicate her features were, and knew that a little colour in her cheeks would make her lovely.

After luncheon he had followed the ladies into the drawing-room. It was the first time since Miss Dixon's arrival that he had done so. As he threw himself into a chair and picked up a book without the least intention of reading it, and with a side glance at Mary to see what she was going to do, he caught a look on his step-mother's face which arrested his attention, though he did not let her see it.

He had seen Mrs. Mayne's blue eyes, unusually so placid, travel stealthily from her daughter to him wide with an anxiety he could not understand.

What on earth was she afraid of? After turning this question over in his mind, with his eyes on his book, he could only come to the one conclusion, that she feared, with a mother's natural partiality, that her daughter's attractions, to which he had been so blind until to-day, might disturb the course of his affection for little Elspeth. If this were so, her disinterestedness did his step-mother great credit. For would it not have been to the interest of herself and her daughter to secure himself as a son-in-law, and have no more care for the girl's future any more than for her own? Godfrey Mayne presented advantages. It was not every young man who was heir to such a place as Croxham Abbey. There was something in all this that he could not penetrate.

"It is very hot in this room," he observed. "If you will trust to me, Miss Dixon, I will undertake to find you a seat where you shall even have a breeze."

"If you can manufacture that, I will go with pleasure," said she.

Godfrey noted, he thought, dismay on the mother's face as they both left her presence. The refectory was a large, high room at

the back of the house, furnished meagrely with odds and ends that were not wanted anywhere else, carpeted with matting, and having a mouldy, unused smell. However, it was cool enough. Godfrey drew an American chair to one of the windows, which he threw open. A trailing branch of Virginia creeper, which had been crushed against the panes, fell inside on to the window-sill.

"Now, if you sit there, you can enjoy the breeze and the ants at the same time."

"What a lovely room! Doesn't anybody use it?" asked she, as she placed herself in the long low chair in an easy attitude that Godfrey admired as he answered her.

"It is scarcely ever used," he answered, not choosing to say that he now came to it sometimes in consequence of being turned out of the other. "It used to be our play-room."

Miss Dixon went on. "It is difficult to find anything to say about the Abbey but 'How nice!' 'How lovely!' I think you must be tired of hearing it admired."

"I should have thought you must have seen too many beautiful places, too many châteaux in France, and palaces in Rome and Venice, to think much of this old homestead."

A shadow crossed her face, so quickly that he could not describe it; and when she answered, the momentary vivacity with which she had last spoken had gone out of her voice.

"I have seen a great many beautiful places, as you say. But just as they have charms of their own, so has an English country-house qualities which none of the foreign palaces possess."

"By Jove, it has!" assented Godfrey, with sudden heartiness. "I beg your pardon, Miss Dixon. I hope you will forgive my warmth, but, there, I can so entirely agree with you. If you want to wean yourself from the world by learning to hate your very existence, if you want to meditate a battle or a murder, if you want to go melancholy mad on a windy night or suspend yourself from a silken rope on a wet Sunday—there is no place like an English country-house. And in all the advantages I have described, the Abbey, I pledge you my word, yields to none."

Mary Dixon laughed, showing her pretty teeth. "Then why do you stay here?"

"Upon my word I hardly know why I do. Want of energy to go elsewhere."

It seemed to Godfrey that another shadow, of a different kind, appeared for an instant on the pale face as he said these words; almost, this time, as if the large brown eyes had dared for a second to flash forth an expression of contempt. Surely he must have been mistaken. This little, white, timid girl would never dare to take such a liberty with him. He continued:

"I expect you will soon find the charms of Croxham pall. No woman can exist here."

"But surely I have seen some women about?" said she, smiling.

"Oh, you don't count them, surely?" rejoined he, with a quiver about the corners of his mouth as he saw that she understood him. "They, whom you saw to-day, can manage to drag on a poor existence here, because they don't know of any of those things which make a woman's life worth having. Look at their dress, for instance. Did you see one wearer to-day with even elementary notions on the subject? They don't understand what dress means, or the enormous difference it makes not only to the wearers but to the beholders."

"Yes," said Miss Dixon, gently, but with a gleam in her soft dark eyes as they steadily met his. "Not only can a well-chosen gown change a girl from an insignificant thing, not worth the trouble of looking at, into a rational creature; but it can also change a boor into a gentleman."

And as the tea-bell rang at that moment, she sprang up with more energy, but not with less grace, than he had yet seen in her, and was at the door before he had time to open it for her.

Surely she must know, thought Godfrey—as he followed her without sign of stooping, so much was his dignity hurt—that she had offended him by that speech! As he walked after the little white figure, with its erect dark head and a certain haughtiness of carriage which he had not noticed before, along the hall towards the drawing-room, it seemed to him that not only did she know she had offended him, but that she absolutely had the effrontery not to care.

Well, she would soon find out the extent of the mistake she had made; she would discover what madness it was, in one of those English country-houses she was so enthusiastic about, to offend the only man about the place on whom she could depend for escort and companionship. A boor, was he? Then a boor he would remain as far as she was concerned. So, having during tea done his best to mark his displeasure by devoting himself exclusively to Mrs. Mayne, he left the room without another look at the white cashmere: and when dinner-time came, he still maintained towards the young lady the frigidity which, as he had not at the time the wit to see, was much more flattering than indifference.

He felt, in spite of himself, rather interested to know whether her pretty toilette that day had been a happy accident, such as a chance visit to Paris might even bring about in the costume of one of the ladies of the neighbourhood whom he so much despised.

The first glance at her next morning, when he came down as usual when breakfast was nearly over, satisfied him on that point. The grey linen trimmed with coarse lace, and relieved at the throat by one tiny sprig of scarlet geranium, was as perfect in its way as the white cashmere of the day before. It was difficult to be indifferent to the wearer of such a gown, Godfrey felt; but principle must be maintained: at any rate, the first advances towards reconciliation must come from the offender.

But the offender gave no sign. For two days they scarcely spoke to each other; and although Godfrey even went out of his way to give her opportunities of saying a few words of gracious commonplace in a conciliatory manner—for he had relented so far as to be ready to accept this as amends—she let them slip in a way which admitted but of one explanation: she did not want to make amends.

And then it was that Godfrey began to put to himself this question: What was the meaning of the strange inconsistency between Miss Dixon's ease of movement and Miss Dixon's stiffness of manner? How was it that a woman whose every motion was full of the freedom grafted by culture on natural grace, a woman who had mastered the difficult art of dressing perfectly, who, although she spoke little, spoke like one familiar with society as well as with books—should yet, in the not very alarming presence of her mother and of two harmless country gentlemen, appear reserved, timid, reticent and depressed, with a timidity and reserve usually associated only with the shy, half-fledged school-girl?

Was it the very dulness and loneliness of the Abbey which frightened her into low spirits? And why was she so fond of solitude? Was it caused by the prejudice against her which still reigned strongly in the village, the unpleasant nickname of "White Witch" that had been given her? Did she even know it?

When Godfrey put some of these questions to his step-mother, with an air of languid indifference as to the answer she would make, which re-assured her as to the slightness of the interest he took in the subject, she laughed rather nervously, said that Mary had always been shy, that she had never cared much for society, and that she was quite happy. And she finished by saying that all that the girl cared for in the world was books.

But even without glancing at those plump white hands whose nervous twitching in moments of anxiety or perplexity he began to understand so well, Godfrey knew that all these statements were false. Miss Dixon was not "shy;" there was not a trace of awkwardness or self-consciousness in the habitual timidity which she had suddenly broken through to tell him his conduct was boorish. If she did not care for society, she had too much of the repose which it gives, under all her reserve, not to have been a good deal in it. Mary Dixon was not happy, whatever her mother might think, or pretend to think: and, finally, if she had in truth cared for nothing but books, she would not have dressed so well.

The little mystery that hung about her, which caused his step-mother to tell so many small falsehoods, which had previously led her to try so hard to prevent her daughter's coming, irritated him, Godfrey, to such an extent that he began to feel life was not worth having until he had found it out. That it was not anything very serious he felt sure. Dear, simple-minded, placid Mrs. Mayne was so clumsy a conspirator, with her bungling over the letter-bag, her tell-tale nervous-

ness and her transparent stories, that Godfrey concluded she could not have anything very dreadful to hide. His interest was soon quickened by the fact that a few weeks of country air and country walks had so good an effect upon the young lady's looks, that he began to feel his neglect of her was not only discourteous, but wrong.

Now that the bloom of health had returned to her cheeks, she was very beautiful. It took effect upon the golden youth of the neighbourhood; and Godfrey, engaged man though he was, was enraged at having missed the opportunity of securing the intimacy of a brother with her, as he felt that he might have done, had she not so grossly tricked him at the outset into thinking her insipid and uninteresting. Now it was too late; though her reserve and timidity remained, she showed through it all a marked intention of keeping him in that background place which he had at first chosen to fill.

The conviction began to grow in force upon him that there must be something wrong about her; and, his attention being now fully alive, he discovered something in the relations between mother and daughter to puzzle him afresh. It was this: although it was clear that Miss Dixon's health and spirits had rapidly improved, and also that the meeting with strangers, either callers at the Abbey or people she visited with her mother, seemed to make her brighter instead of overwhelming her with shyness, as Mrs. Mayne asserted, yet the latter seemed anxious for her to keep to the secluded solitary life she had led on her first arrival, and insisted that if she went out much, her health would soon give way altogether.

"But, my dear Laura," said Mr. Mayne one day, when his wife objected to her daughter being included in a party they were making up to go to see a polo match, "it would not be more fatiguing than the little dance she went to the other night, and she has been looking better ever since. I believe she is a vain little peacock, after all, and likes being considered the prettiest girl in the room and to know that they all want to dance with her. I am sure she would like to go. Why, her eyes glisten at the thought! Wouldn't you like it, Mary?"

She gave a glance at her mother, and said she was afraid she must give it up. The long day in the hot sun might be too much for her.

On the afternoon of the match, however, when the waggonette had come round, and Mary was peeping out of the library with a book in her hand, but with a wistful look on her face, Mr. Mayne, who was waiting for his wife at the foot of the stairs, beckoned to her stealthily, and gently pushed her in the direction of the staircase.

"There, my dear, run upstairs and put your hat on as fast as you can. You are longing to go, and go you shall."

"But mamma—you know we decided I had better not go!"

"Never mind; I say you are to go. It won't do you any harm; it's all nonsense; you're not made of gingerbread. Now go at once, there's a good girl, or I shall be very much hurt and offended."

"But the waggonette will be overcrowded!"

Mr. Mayne stamped his foot. He hated opposition and was getting impatient. She looked at his kind old face once more and decided. In an instant she had flown upstairs, and before her mother had reached the hall-door the blushing, guilty girl was by her side, glad to hide her confusion by drawing on her gloves, while Mr. Mayne exultingly told his wife of his change of plan. She said very little, as usual, but was evidently much annoyed. They were going to take the three eldest Thornhill girls, and with the extra person the waggonette would be inconveniently crowded. Godfrey was vexed too; he hardly knew why. For one thing, Mary Dixon's hurried toilet would completely cut out Elspeth's. Mr. Mayne, on the seat in front, beside Barth, the coachman, was cloudlessly happy at his ill-advised success, and turned round to rally them on being so silent a party. His victim, Mary, felt very uncomfortable, and when they arrived at the ground gently scolded her step-father on the first opportunity.

"My coming has spoilt everything and made them all cross," whispered she, piteously.

"Never mind, my dear. Not at all. It is all right."

In a few minutes Mr. Mayne, who had been going about, returned to Mary and said Mrs. Underwood wanted to see her. A sudden new light of anxiety flashed in Mrs. Mayne's eyes at the name, but she had not time to make any objection: they were already away.

Mrs. Underwood, of Croxham Grange, was the still handsome wife of the jolliest old officer who ever thought the crowning glory of a soldier's life was the mess-table. He and she had both taken a fancy to little Miss Dixon, and the only one of their children who remained at home, Ernest, a young fellow close upon twenty-one, had dutifully followed suit. He had come to the ground in his dog-cart. When he caught sight of his favourite partner of a few nights ago sitting in the carriage with his mother, he jumped down before the groom could catch the reins, and rushed up to it.

"Miss Dixon, I'm so glad to see you! I thought you did not care for polo and were not coming."

"I—Mr. Mayne would have me come."

"Why, young girls ought not to want much insistence to enjoy themselves," said Colonel Underwood. "And you don't look as if you did, Miss Dixon. We have all heard a great deal of your studious habits, but it is my belief you are a fraud, and only study when you can't get anything better to do."

The colour rushed into her cheeks at this, and Mrs. Underwood told him not to tease her. All the officers of the regiment stationed at Cheston knew the Underwoods, who were very popular; and they came crowding round the carriage. When Godfrey made his way to it, he found Miss Dixon looking her best and brightest, chattering away with a gaiety she never showed at the Abbey, or, as it suddenly

occurred to him, in her mother's presence. She seemed quite to ignore him; and he went back to the waggonette and his duty, feeling vaguely dissatisfied with himself and everybody else.

Late in the afternoon he was sent to tell her that they were ready to return home.

"Thank you, Mr. Godfrey," said she, "but the waggonette was so dreadfully crowded in coming, owing to my unfortunate presence—you know you said so yourself—that I think I shall accept the very kind offer I have just had from ——"

"You will not be cramped up this time," he interrupted. "My father goes back inside, Barth will be sent home, and you shall sit in front with me." Godfrey spoke coldly: he was pulling his moustache and looking disagreeable enough to make the prospect of a tête-à-tête with him anything but inviting. "If you fancied you heard me regret your coming, you misunderstood me; I was only sorry for the inconvenience you suffered."

"Miss Dixon, I beg your pardon, let me speak to you for a minute," broke in Ernest eagerly from the other side.

Godfrey, with some great defects, had abundant small ones: one was a sharp sense of hearing for anything people wished to keep from him. In the lad's excited whisper he plainly heard the words "sulky brute: drives awfully badly."

The last reproach was unfortunately true, in so far as that Godfrey was a careless driver. Miss Dixon turned to him with a far sweeter smile than she had ever before given him, and said that she had accepted a seat in the dog-cart—to relieve the waggonette—with Mrs. Underwood's approval.

Godfrey hardly had the decency to wait till the end of her sentence before he raised his hat and went off, without another word, boiling and seething with rage. And the fast pace at which he rattled his party home was remarkable.

A cigar in the garden, where he lounged about on his return, glancing from time to time at the road, failed to restore him to good temper. At last the dog-cart came in sight, rolling merrily along, its two occupants in front laughing, and evidently on the best of terms. When it stopped he was out of sight. But he saw Ernest drive off, looking very well satisfied with himself.

"Conceited ape!" thought Godfrey, as he threw his cigar away. He strolled towards the window of the drawing-room, without any object; as he drew near he heard the voice of Miss Dixon, speaking to her mother.

"And he is only a boy; younger by a year or two than myself, and I must talk to somebody. I cannot always live shut up like a nun."

"Be quiet, Mary," broke in her mother imperiously, but yet with an undisguised dread in her tones. "You have no heart; you are a stone; your hardness frightens me. You can enjoy yourself, and flirt and dance, as if we were not in danger, pursued by ——"

"Hush, mamma—for Heaven's sake!" broke in the young girl in a voice of terror.

Mrs. Mayne began to sob. Godfrey did not scruple to listen: the window was open and the words came out quite distinctly. He could not get away, there was that much to be said for him, without being heard and seen. He was standing in the flower-bed close under the wall, by the side of the window.

"I tell you it is as much to your advantage as to mine that I should forget a little—if I can," Mary continued, almost in a whisper. "If I go on living within myself I shall go mad, and then ——" She stopped, with what sounded plainly like a fearful significance.

"Don't talk like that, child, or you will kill me," sobbed Mrs. Mayne. "I do not wish to be hard to you; but yet—if you would only show a little heart!"

"Take care, mamma, that you don't show too much. I am not so hard as you think; only, as I tell you, I must forget now and then: unless you wish me to die!" she ended passionately.

"I ought not to have let you come here; it but increases the risk. But Mr. Mayne was so resolute—and would have fetched you himself—and—and I did not know what to do for the safest. I thought, you see, Mary, that in coming here myself I was coming to a place of shelter; but somehow I am beginning to fear it may not prove so. If ——"

"Hush, mamma, it will be all right," repeated the girl, hastily. "You may trust me, you *must* trust me, for I am young and I cannot live always like a statue; now I have grown stronger, all my old spirits come back in spite of myself, and of what you know. And if you see me enjoying myself sometimes in lightness, I do pray you to leave me alone; I tell you again that you may trust me."

"And I tell you, Mary, that it would be safer for us both if you put on your reserve of manner, and kept quiet within doors, instead of gadding about in public."

"I want more amusement sometimes than I can get indoors," responded the girl, a wring of reproach in her words. "You and Mr. Mayne are devoted to yourselves; and that ill-mannered bear of a son of his does not please me. It is selfish of me to want it, I dare say; but each of us must bear the burden in our own way. Don't cry, mamma; don't cry! I do not want to cross your will; but I must take some little good out of life while I can. Heaven knows it may not be for long."

Through all the reckless passion of her last words, her voice remained low, so that a portion of them Godfrey did not catch. But he had heard quite enough.

The dressing-bell was ringing, and they both quitted the room, leaving him planted there, against the outer wall.

(To be continued.)

ROGER BEVERE.

THE BELL-AND-CLAPPER.

ROGER BEVERE'S arm proved obstinate. Swollen and inflamed as I had never seen any arm yet, it induced fever, and he had to take to his bed. Scott, who had his wits about him in most ways, had not spoken a minute too soon, or been mistaken as to the probable danger; while Mr. Pitt told Roger every time he came to dress it, beginning with the first evening, that he deserved all he got for being so fool-hardy as to neglect it: as a medical man in embryo, he ought to have foreseen the hazard.

It seemed to me that Roger was just as ill as he was at Gibraltar Terrace, when they sent for his mother: if not worse. Most days I got down to Paradise Place to snatch a look at him. It was not far, taking the underground railway from Miss Deveen's.

I made the best report I could to Lady Bevere, telling nothing—except that the arm was giving a little trouble. If she got to learn the truth about certain things, she would think the letters deceitful. But what else could I do?—I wished with all my heart somebody else had to write them. As Scott had said to me about the flitting from Mrs. Long's (the reason for which or necessity of it, I was not enlightened upon yet), I could not betray Bevere. Pitt assured me that if any unmanageable complications arose with the arm, both Lady Bevere and Mr. Brandon should be at once telegraphed for. A fine complication it would be, of another sort, if they did come! How about Miss Lizzie?

Of all the free-and-easy young women I had ever met with, that same Lizzie was the freest and easiest. Many a time have I wondered Bevere did not order her out of the room when she said audacious things to him or to me—not to say out of the house. He did nothing of the kind; he lay passive as a bird that has had its wings clipt, all spirit gone out of him, and groaning with bodily pain. Why on earth did he allow her to make his house her abode, disturbing it with her noise and her clatter? Why on earth—to go on further—did he rent a house at all, small or large? Nobody else lived in it, that I saw, except a little maid, in her early teens, to do the work. Later I found I was mistaken: they were only lodgers: an old landlady, lame and quiet, was in the kitchens.

"Looks fearfully bad, don't he!" whispered Lizzie to me on one occasion when he lay asleep, and she came bursting into the room for her bonnet and shawl.

"Yes. Don't you think you could be rather more quiet?"

"As quiet as a lamb if you like," laughed Lizzie, and crept out on tiptoe. She was always good-humoured.

One afternoon when I went in, Lizzie had a visitor in the parlour. Miss Panken! The two, evidently on terms of close friendship, were laughing and joking frantically; Lizzie's head with its clouds of red-gold hair, was drawn close to the other head and the mass of black braids adorning it. Miss Panken sat sipping a cup of tea; Lizzie a tumbler of hot water that gave forth a suspicious odour.

"I've got a headache, Mr. Johnny," said she: and I marvelled that she did not, in her impudence, leave the "Mr." out. "Hot gin-and-water is the very best remedy you can take for it."

Shrieks of laughter from both the girls followed me up stairs to Roger's bedside: Miss Panken was relating some joke about her companion, Mabel. Roger said his arm was a trifle better. It always felt so when Pitt had been to it.

"Who is it that's down stairs now?" he asked, fretfully, as the bursts of merriment sounded through the floor. "Sit down, Johnny."

"It's a girl from the Bell-and-Clapper refreshment room. Miss Panken they call her."

Roger frowned. "I have told Lizzie over and over again that I'd not have those girls encouraged here. What can possess her to do it?" And, after saying that, he passed into one of those fits of restlessness that used to attack him at Gibraltar Terrace.

"Look here, Roger," I said, presently, "couldn't you—pull up a bit? Couldn't you put all this nonsense away?"

"Which nonsense?" he retorted.

"What would Mr. Brandon say if he knew it?—I'll not speak of your mother. It is not nice, you know; it is not indeed."

"Can't you speak out?" he returned, with intense irritation. "Put what away?"

"Lizzie."

I spoke the name under my breath, not liking to say it, though I had wanted to for some time. All the anger seemed to go out of Roger. He lay still as death.

"*Can't* you, Roger?"

"Too late, Johnny," came back the answer in a whisper of pain.

"Why?"

"She is my wife."

I leaped from my chair in a sort of terror. "No, no, Roger, don't say that! don't say it for the love of heaven! It cannot be."

"But it *is*," he groaned. "These eighteen months past."

I stood dazed; all my senses in a whirl. Roger kept silence, his face turned to the pillow. And the laughter from below came surging up.

I had no heart affection that I was aware of, but I had to press my hand to still its thumping as I leaned over Roger.

"Really married? Surely married?"

"As fast and sure as the registrar could marry us," came the smothered answer. "We did not go to church."

"Oh, Roger! *How* came you to do it?"

"Because I was a fool."

I sat down again, right back in the chair. Things that had puzzled me before were clearing themselves now. *This* was the torment that had worried his mind and prolonged, if not induced, the fever, when he first lay ill of the accident; this was the miserable secret that had gone well-nigh to disturb the brain: partly for the incubus the marriage entailed upon him, partly lest it should be found out. It had caused him to invent fables in more ways than one. Not only had he to conceal his proper address from us all when at Gibraltar Terrace, especially from his mother and Mr. Brandon; but he had had to scheme with Scott to keep his wife in ignorance altogether —of his accident and of where he was lying, lest Lizzie should present herself at his bedside. To account for his absence from home, Scott had improvised a story to her of Roger's having been despatched by the hospital authorities to watch a case of illness at a little distance; and Lizzie unsuspiciously supplied Scott with changes of raiment and other things Roger needed from his chest of drawers.

This did for a time. But about the period of Roger's quitting Gibraltar Terrace, Lizzie unfortunately caught up an inkling that she was being deceived. Miss Panken's general acquaintance was numerous, and one day one of them chanced to go into the bar-room of the Bell-and-Clapper, and to mention, incidentally, that Roger Bevere had been run over by a hansom cab, and was lying disabled in some remote doctor's quarters—for that's what Scott told his fellow students. Madam Lizzie rose in rebellion, accused Scott of being no gentleman, and insisted upon her right to be enlightened. So, to stop her from making her appearance at St. Bartholomew's with inconvenient enquiries, and possibly still more inconvenient revelations, Roger had promptly to quit the new lodgings at Mrs. Long's, and return to the old home near the Bell-and-Clapper. But I did not learn these particulars at first.

"Who knows it, Roger?" I asked, breaking the silence.

"Not one of them but Scott," he answered, supposing I alluded to the hospital. "I see Pitt has his doubts."

"But they know—some of them—that Lizzie is here!"

"Well? So did you, but you did not suspect further. They think of course that—well, there's no help for what they think. When a fellow is in such a position as mine, he has to put up with things as they come. I can't quite ruin myself, Johnny; or let the authorities know what an idiot I've been. Lizzie's aunt knows it; and that's enough at present; and so do those girls at the Bell-and-Clapper—worse luck!"

It was impossible to talk much of it then, at that first disclosure; I wished Roger good afternoon, and went away in a fever-dream.

My wildest surmises had not pictured this dismal climax. No, never; for all that Mistress Lizzie's left hand displayed a plain gold ring of remarkable thickness. "She would have it thick," Roger said to me later. Poor Roger! poor Roger!

I felt it like a blow—like a blow. No good would ever come of it—to either of them. Worse than no good to him. It was not so much the unsuitableness of the girl's condition to his; it was the girl herself. She would bring him no credit, no comfort as long as she lived: what happiness could he ever find with her? I had grown to like Roger, with all his faults and failings, and it almost seemed to me, in my sorrow for him, as if my own life were blighted.

It might not have been quite so bad—not *quite*—had Lizzie been a different girl. Modest, yielding, gentle, like that little Mabel I had seen, for instance, learning to adapt her manners to the pattern of her husband's; had she been that, why in time, perhaps, things might have smoothed down for him. But Lizzie! with her free and loud manners, her off-hand ways, her random speech, her vulgar laughs! Well, well!

How was it possible she had been able to bring her fascinations to bear upon him—he with his refinement? One can but sit down in amazement and ask how, in the name of common-sense, such incongruities happen in the world. She must have tamed down what was objectionable in her to sugar and sweetness while setting her cap at Bevere; while he—he must have been blind, physically and mentally. But no sooner was the marriage over than he awoke to see what he had done for himself. Since then his time had been principally spent in setting-up contrivances to keep the truth from becoming known. Mr. Brandon had talked of his skeleton in the closet: he had not dreamt of such a skeleton as this.

"Must have gone in largely for strong waters in those days, and been in a chronic state of imbecility, I should say," observed Pitt, making his comments to me confidentially.

For I had spoken to him of the marriage, finding he knew as much as I did. "I shall never be able to understand it," I said.

"*That's* easy enough. When Circe and a goose sit down to play ness, no need to speculate which will win the game."

"You speak lightly of it, Mr. Pitt."

"Not particularly. Where's the use of speaking gravely now the deed's done? It is a pity for Bevere; but he is only one young man amid many such who in some way or another spoil their lives at its threshold. Johnny Ludlow, when I look about me and see the snares spread abroad in this great metropolis by night and by day, and at the crowds of inexperienced lads—they are not much better—who have to run to and fro continually, I marvel that the number of those who lose themselves is not increased ten-fold."

He had changed his tone to one solemn enough for a judge.

"I cannot *think* how he came to do it," I argued. "Or how such a one as Bevere, well-intentioned, well brought up, could have allowed himself to fall into what Mr. Brandon calls loose habits. How came he to take to drinking ways, even in a small degree?"

"The railway refreshment bars did that for him, I take it," answered Pitt. "He lived up here from the first, by the Bell-and-Clapper, and I suppose found the underground train more convenient than the omnibus. Up he'd rush in a morning to catch—say—the half-past eight train, and would often miss it by half a minute. A miss is as good as a mile. Instead of cooling his heels on the draughty and deserted platform, he would turn into the refreshment room and find there warmth and sociable company in the shape of pretty girls to chat with: and, if he so minded, a glass of something or other to keep out the cold on a wintry morning."

"As if Bevere would!—at that early hour!"

"Some of them do," affirmed Pitt. "Anyway, that's how Bevere fell into the habit of frequenting the bar-room of the Bell-and-Clapper. It lay so handy, you see; right in his path. He would run into it again of an evening when he returned: he had no home, no friends waiting for him, only lodgings. There ——"

"I thought Bevere used to board with a family," I interrupted.

"So he did at first; and very nice people they were: Mr. Brandon took care he should be well placed. That's why Bevere came up this way at all: it was rather far from the hospital, but Mr. Brandon knew the people. In a short time, however, the lady died, the home was broken up, and Bevere then took lodgings on his own account; and so—there was nobody to help him keep out of mischief.—To go on with what I was saying. He learnt to frequent the bar-room at the Bell-and-Clapper: not only to run into it in a morning, but also on his return in the evening. He had no sociable tea or dinner-table waiting for him, you see, with pleasant faces round it. All the pleasant faces he met were those behind the counter; and there he would stay, talking, laughing, chaffing with the girls, one of whom was Miss Lizzie, goodness knows how long—the places are kept open till midnight."

"It had its attractions for him, I suppose—what with the girls and the bottles."

Pitt nodded. "It has for many a one besides him, Johnny. Roger had to call for drink; possibly without the slightest natural inclination for anything, he had perforce to call for it; he could hardly linger there unless he did. By-and-by, I reckon, he got to like the drink; he acquired the taste for it, you see, and habit soon becomes second nature; one glass became two glasses, two glasses three. This went on for a time. The next act in the young man's drama was, that he allowed himself to glide into an entangle-

ment of some sort with one of the said girls, Miss Lizzie Field, and was drawn-in to marry her."

"How have you learnt these particulars?"

"Partly from Scott. They are true. Scott has a married brother living up this way, and is often running up here; indeed at one time he lived with him, and he and Bevere used to go to and fro to St. Bartholomew's in company. Yes," slowly added the doctor, "that refreshment room has been the bane of Roger Bevere."

"And not of Scott?"

"It did Scott no good; you may take a vow of that. But Scott has some plain, rough common-sense of his own, which kept him from going too far. He may make a good man yet; and a name also, for he possesses all the elements of a skilful surgeon. Bevere succumbed to the seductions of the bar-room, as other foolish young fellows, well-intentioned at heart, but weak in moral strength, have done, and will do again. Irresistible temptations they present, these places, to the young men who have to come in contact with them. If the lads had to go out of their way to seek the temptation, they might never do it; but it lies right in their path, you perceive, and they can't pass it by.—Of course I am not speaking of all young men; only of those who are deficient in moral self-control. To some, the Bell-and Clapper bar-room presents no more attraction than the Bell-and-Clapper church by its side; or any other of such rooms, either."

"Is there not any remedy for this state of things?"

Pitt shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose not," he said. "Since I pulled up from drinking, I have been unable to see what these underground-railway rooms are needed for: why a man or woman, travelling but for half an hour, more or less, must needs be provided with places to drink in at both ends of the journey and all the middles. Biscuits and buns are there as well, you may say—serving as an excuse perhaps. But for one biscuit called for, there are fifty glasses of ale, or what not. Given the necessity for the rooms," added Pitt, with a laugh, "I should do away with the lady-servers and substitute men; which would put an end to three parts of the attraction. No chance of *that* reformation.

"Because it would do away with three parts of the custom," I said, echoing his laugh.

"Be you very sure of that, Johnny Ludlow. However, it is no business of mine to find fault with existing customs, seeing that I cannot alter them," concluded the doctor.

What he said set me thinking. Every time I passed by one of these stations, so crowded with the traffic of young city men, and saw the bottles arrayed to charm the sight, their bright colours gleaming and glistening, and looked at the serving damsels, with their bedecked heads, arrayed to charm also, I knew Pitt must be right. These rooms might bring in grist to their owners' mill; but it struck

me that I should not like, when I got old, to remember that I had owned one.

Roger Bevere's arm began to yield to treatment, but he continued very ill in himself; too ill to get up. Torment of mind and torment of body are a bad complication.

One afternoon when I was sitting with him, sundry quick knocks down stairs threatened to disturb the doze he was falling into—and Pitt had said that sleep to him just now was like gold. I crept away to stop it. In the middle of the parlour, thumping on the floor with her cotton umbrella—a huge green thing that must have been the fellow, when made, to Sairey Gamp's—stood Mrs. Dyke, a stout, good-natured, sensible woman, whom I often saw there. Her husband was a well-to-do coachman, whose first wife had been sister to Lizzie's mother, and this wife was their cousin.

"Where's Lizzie, sir?" she asked. "Out, I suppose?"

"Yes, I think so. I saw her with her bonnet on."

"The girl's out, too, I take it, or she'd have heard me," remarked Mrs. Dyke, as she took her seat on the shabby red sofa, and pushed her bonnet back from her hot and comely face. "And how are we going on up there, sir?"—pointing to the ceiling.

"Very slowly. He cannot get rid of the fever."

She lodged the elegant umbrella against the sofa's arm and turned sideways to face me. I had sat down by the window, not caring to go back and run the risk of disturbing Roger.

"Now come, sir," she said, "let us talk comfortable: you won't mind giving me your opinion, I dare say. I have looked out for an opportunity to ask it: you being what you are, sir, and his good friend. Them two—they don't hit it off well together, do they?"

Knowing she must allude to Bevere and his wife, I had no ready answer at hand. Mrs. Dyke took silence for assent.

"Ah, I see how it is. I thought I must be right; I've thought it for some time. But Lizzie only laughs in my face, when I ask her. There's no happiness between 'em; just the other thing; I told Lizzie so only yesterday. But they can't undo what they have done, and there's nothing left for them, sir, but to make the best of it."

"That's true, Mrs. Dyke. And I think Lizzie might do more towards it than she does. If she would only ——"

"Only try to get a bit into his ways and manners and not offend him with hers," put in discerning Mrs. Dyke, when I hesitated. "He is as nice a young gentleman as ever lived, and I believe has the making in him of a good husband. But Lizzie is vulgar and her ways are vulgar; and instead of checking herself and remembering that he is just the opposite, and that naturally it must offend him, she lets herself grow more so day by day. I know what's what, sir, having been used to the ways of gentry when I was a young woman, for I lived cook for some years in a good family."

"Lizzie's ways are so noisy."

"Her ways are noisy and rampagious," assented Mrs. Dyke, "more particularly when she has been at her drops; and noise puts out a sick man."

"Her drops!" I repeated, involuntarily, the word calling up a latent doubt that lay in my mind.

"When girls that have been in busy employment all day and every day, suddenly settle down to idleness, they sometimes slip into this habit or that habit, not altogether good for themselves, which they might never else have had time to think of," remarked Mrs. Dyke. "I've come in here more than once lately and seen Lizzie drinking hot spirits-and-water in the daytime: I know you must have seen the same, sir, or I'd not mention it—and beer she'll take unlimited."

Of course I had seen it.

"I think she must have learnt it at the counter; drinking never was in our family, and I never knew that it was in her father's," continued Mrs. Dyke. "But some of the young women, serving at these bars, get to like the drink through having the sight and smell of it about 'em all day long."

That was more than likely, but I did not say so, not caring to continue that branch of the subject.

"The marriage was a misfortune, Mrs. Dyke."

"For him I suppose you gentlemen consider it was," she answered. "It will be one for her if he should die: she'd have to go back to work again and she has got out o' the trick of it. Ah! she thought grand things of it at first, naturally, marrying a gentleman! But unequal marriages rarely turn out well in the long run. I knew nothing of it till it was done and over, or I should have advised her against it; my husband's place lay at a different part of London then—Eaton Square way. Better, perhaps, for Lizzie had she gone out to service in the country, like her sister."

"Did she always live in London?"

"Dear, no, sir, nor near it; she lived down in Essex with her father and mother. But she came up to London on a visit, and fell in love with the public life, through getting to know a young woman who was in it. Nothing could turn her, once her mind was set upon it; and being sharp and clever, quick at figures, she got taken on at some wine-vaults in the city. After staying there awhile and giving satisfaction, she changed to the refreshment-room at the Bell-and-Clapper. Miss Panken went there soon after, and they grew very intimate. The young girl left, who had been there before her; very pretty she was: I don't know what became of her. At some of the counters they have but one girl; at others, two."

"It is a pity girls should be at them at all—drawing on the young men! I am speaking generally, Mrs. Dyke."

"It is a pity the young men should be so soft as to be drawn on

by them—if you'll excuse my saying it, sir," she returned, quickly. "But there—what would you? Human nature's the same all the world over: Jack and Jill. The young men like to talk to the girls, and the girls like very much to talk to the young men. Of course these barmaids lay themselves out to the best advantage, in the doing of their hair and their white frills, and what not, which is human nature again, sir. Look at a young lady in a drawing-room: don't she set herself off when she is expecting the beaux to call?"

Mrs. Dyke paused for want of breath. Her tongue ran on fast, but it told of good sense.

"The barmaids are but like the young ladies, sir; and the young fellows that congregate there get to admire them, while sipping their drops at the counter; if, as I say, they are soft enough. When the girls get hold of one softer than the rest, why perhaps one of them gets over him so far as to entrap him to give her his name—just as safe as you hook and land a fish."

"And I suppose it has a different termination sometimes?"

Honest Mrs. Dyke shook her head. "We won't talk about that, sir: I can't deny that it may happen once in a way. Not often, let's hope. The young women, as a rule, are well-conducted and respectable: they mostly know how to take care of themselves."

"I should say Miss Panken does."

Mrs. Dyke's broad face shone with merriment. "Ain't she impudent? Oh yes, sir, Polly Panken can take care of herself, never fear. But it's not a good atmosphere for young girls to be in, you see, sir, these public bars; whether it may be only at a railway counter, or at one of them busy taverns in the town, or at the gay places of amusement, the manners and morals of the girls get to be a bit loose, as it were, and they can't help it."

"Or anybody else, I suppose."

"No, sir, not as things are: and it's just a wrong upon them that they should be exposed to it. They'd be safer and quieter in a respectable service, which is the state of life many of 'em were born to—though a few may be superior—and better behaved, too: manners is sure to get a bit corrupted in the public line. But the girls like their liberty; they like the free-and-easy public life and its idleness; they like the flirting and the chaffing and the nonsense that goes on; they like to be dressed up of a day as if they were so many young ladies, their hair done off in bows and curls and frizzes, and their hands in cuffs and lace-edgings; now and then you may see 'em with a ring on. That's a better life, they think, than they'd lead as servants or shop-women, or any of the other callings open to this class of young women: and perhaps it is. It's easier, at any rate. I've heard that some quite superior young people are in it, who might be, or were, governesses, and couldn't find employment, poor young ladies, through the market being so overstocked. Ah, it is a hard thing, sir, for a well brought-up young woman to find lady-like employment now-a-

days. One thing is certain," concluded Mrs. Dyke, "that we shall never have a lack of barmaids in this country until a law is passed by the legislature—which, happen, never will be passed—to forbid girls serving in these places. There'd be less foolishness going on then, and a deal less drinking."

These were Pitt's ideas over again.

A loud laugh outside, and Lizzie came running in. "Why, Aunt Dyke, are you there!—entertaining Mr. Johnny Ludlow!" she exclaimed, as she threw herself into a chair. "Well, I never. And what *do* you two think I am going to do to-morrow?"

"Now just you mind your manners, young woman," advised the aunt.

"I am minding them—don't you begin blowing-up," retorted Lizzie, her face brimming over with good humour.

"You might have your things stole; you and the girl out together," said Mrs. Dyke.

"There's nothing to steal but chairs and tables. I'm sure I'm much obliged to you both for sitting here to take care of them. You'll never guess what I am going to do," broke off Lizzie, with shrieks of laughter. "I am going to take my old place again at the Bell-and-Clapper, and serve behind the counter for the day: Mabel Falkner wants a holiday. Won't it be fun!"

"Your husband will not let you; he would not like it," I said in my haste, while Mrs. Dyke sat in open-mouthed amazement.

"And I shall put on my old black dress; I've got it yet; and be a regular barmaid again. A lovely costume, that black is!" ironically ran on Lizzie. "Neat and not gaudy, as the devil said when he painted his tail pea-green. You need not look as though you thought I had made acquaintance with him and heard him say it, Mr. Johnny; I only borrowed it from one of Bulwer's novels that I read the other day."

If I did not think that, I thought Madam Lizzie had been making acquaintance this afternoon with something else. "Drops!" as Mrs. Dyke called it.

"There I shall be to-morrow, at the old work, and you can both come and see me at it," said Lizzie. "I'll treat you more civilly, Mr. Johnny, than Polly Panken did."

"But I say that your husband will not allow you to go," I repeated to her.

"Ah, he's in bed," she laughed; "he can't get out of it to stop me."

"You are all on the wrong tack, Lizzie girl," spoke up the aunt, severely. "If you don't mind, it will land you in shoals and quicksands. How dare you think of running counter to what you know your husband's wishes would be?"

She received this with a louder laugh than ever. "He will not know anything about it, Aunt Dyke. Unless Mr. Johnny Ludlow

here should tell him. It would not make any difference to me if he did," she concluded, with candour.

And as I felt sure it would not, I held my tongue.

By degrees, as the days went on, Roger got about again, and when I left London he was back at St. Bartholomew's. Other uncanny things had happened to me during this visit of mine, but not one of them brought with it so heavy a weight as the thought of poor Roger Bevere and his blighted life.

"His health may get all right if he will give up drinking," were the last words Pitt said to me. "He has promised to do so."

PART II.

THE weather was cold and wintry as we began our railway journey. From two to three years have gone on, you must please note, since the time told of above. Mr. Brandon was about to spend the Christmas with his sister, Lady Bevere—who had quitted Hampshire and settled not far from Brighton—and she had sent me an invitation to accompany him.

We took the train at Evesham. It was Friday, and the shortest day in the year; St. Thomas, the twenty-first of December. Some people do not care to begin a journey on a Friday, thinking it bodes ill-luck: I might have thought the same had I foreseen what was to happen before we got home again.

London reached, we met Roger Bevere at the Brighton station, as agreed upon. He was to travel down with us. I had not seen him since the time of his illness in London, except for an hour once when I was in town upon some business for the Squire. Nothing had transpired to his friends, so far as I knew, of the fatal step he had taken; that was a secret still.

I cannot say I much liked Roger's appearance now, as he sat opposite me in the railway carriage, leaning against the arm of the comfortably-cushioned seat. His fair, pleasant face was gentle as ever, but the once clear blue eyes no longer looked very clear and did not meet ours freely; his hands shook, his fingers were restless. Mr. Brandon did not much like the signs either, to judge by the way he stared at him.

"Have you been well lately, Roger?"

"Oh yes, thank you, Uncle John."

"Well, your looks don't say much for you."

"I am rather hard-worked," said Roger. "London is not a place to grow rosy in."

"Do you like your new work?" continued Mr. Brandon. For Roger had done with St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and was out-door assistant to a surgeon in private practice, a Mr. Anderson.

"I like it better than the hospital work, Uncle John."

"Ah! A fine idea that was of yours—wanting to set-up in

practice for yourself the minute you had passed. Your mother did well to send the letter to me and ask my advice. Some of you boys—boys, and no better—fresh from your hospital studies, screw a brass-plate on your door, announcing yourselves to the world as qualified surgeons. A few of you go a step further and add M.D."

"Many of us take our degree as physician at once, Uncle John," said Roger. "It is becoming quite the custom."

"Just so: the custom!" retorted Mr. Brandon, cynically. "Why didn't *you* do it, and modestly call yourself Dr. Bevere? In my former days, young man, when some ultra grave ailment necessitated application to a physician, we went to him in all confidence, knowing that he was a man of steady years, of long-tried experience, of practical skill, whose advice was to be relied upon. Now, if you are dying and call in some Dr. So-and-so, you may find him a young fellow of three or four and twenty. As likely as not only an M.B. in reality who has arrogated to himself the title of Doctor. For I hear some of them do it."

"But they think they have a right to be called so, Uncle John. The question ——"

"What right?" sharply demanded Mr. Brandon. "What gives it them?"

"Well—courtesy, I suppose," hesitated Roger.

"Oh," said Mr. Brandon.

I laughed. His tone was so quaint.

"Yes, you may laugh, Johnny Ludlow—showing your thoughtlessness! There'll soon be no modesty left in the world," he continued; "there'll soon be no hard, plodding work. Formerly, men were content to labour on patiently for years, to attain success, whether in fame, fortune, or for a moderate competency. Now they must take a leap into it. Tradespeople retire before middle-age, merchants make colossal fortunes in a decade, and (to leave other anomalies alone) you random young hospital students spring into practice full-fledged M.D.s."

"The world is changing, Uncle John."

"It is," assented Mr. Brandon. "I'm not sure that we shall know it by-and-by."

From Brighton terminus we had a drive of two or three miles across country to get to Prior's Glebe—as Lady Bevere's house was named. It was old-fashioned and commodious, and stood in a large square garden that was encircled by a thick belt of towering shrubs. Nothing was to be seen around it but a huge stretch of waste land; half a mile off, rose a little church and a few scattered cottages. "The girls must find this lively!" exclaimed Roger, taking a comprehensive look about him as we drove up in the twilight.

Lady Bevere, kind, gentle, simple-mannered as ever, received us lovingly. Mr. Brandon kissed her, and she kissed me and Roger. It was the first Christmas Roger had spent at home since rushing

into that mad act of his; he had always invented some excuse for declining. The eldest son, Edmund, was in the navy; the second, George, was in the Church; Roger was the third; and the youngest, John, had a post in a merchant's house in Calcutta. Of the four girls, only the eldest, Mary, and the youngest were at home. The little one was named Susan, but they called her Tottams. The other two were on a visit to their aunt, the late Sir Edmund Bevere's sister.

Dinner was waiting when we got in, and I could not snatch half a word with Roger while making ready for it. He and I had two little rooms opening to each other. But when we went up stairs for the night we could talk at will; and I put my candle down on his chest of drawers.

"How are things going with you, Roger!"

"Don't talk of it," he cried, with quite a burst of emotion. "Things cannot be worse than they are."

"I fancy you have not pulled-up much, as Pitt used to call it, have you, old friend? Your hands and your face tell tales."

"How can I pull-up?" he retorted.

"You promised that you would."

"Ay. Promised! When all the world's against a fellow, he may not be able to keep his promises. Perhaps may not care to."

"How is Lizzie?" I said then, dropping my voice.

"Don't talk of her," repeated Bevere, in a tone of despair; despair if I ever heard it. It shut me up.

"Johnny, I'm nearly done over; sick of it all," he went on. "You don't know what I have to bear."

"Still—as regards yourself, you might pull-up," I persisted, for to give in to him, and his mood and his ways, would never do. "You might if you chose, Bevere."

"I suppose I might, if I had any hope. But there's none; none. People tell us that as we make our bed so we must lie upon it. I made mine in an awful fashion years ago, and I must pay the penalty."

"I gather from this—forgive me, Bevere—that you and your wife don't get along together."

"Get along! Things with her are worse than you may think for. She—she—well, *she* has not done her best to turn out well. Heaven knows I'd have tried *my* best; the thing was done, and nothing else was left for us: but she has not let me. We are something like cat-and-dog now, and I am not living with her."

"No!"

"That is, I inhabit other lodgings. She is at the old place. I am with a medical man in Bloomsbury, you know. It was necessary for me to be near him, and six months ago I went. Lizzie acquiesced in that; the matter was obvious. I sometimes go to see her; staying, perhaps, from Saturday to Monday, and come away cursing myself."

"Don't. *Don't*, Bevere."

"She has taken to drink," he whispered, biting his agitated lips. "For pretty near two years now she has not been a day sober. As heaven hears me, I believe *not one day*. You may judge what I've had to bear."

"Could nothing be done?"

"I tried to do it, Johnny. I coaxed, persuaded, threatened her by turns, but she would not leave it off. For four months in the autumn of last year, I did not let a drop of anything come into the house; drinking water myself all the while—for her sake. It was of no use; she'd go out and get it: every public house in the place knows her. I'd come home from the hospital in the evening and find her raving and rushing about the rooms like a mad woman, or else lying incapable on the bed. Believe me, I tried all I could to keep her straight; and Mrs. Dyke, a good, motherly woman, you remember, did her best to help me; but she was too much for both of us, the demon of drink had laid too fast hold of her."

"Does she come bothering you at your new lodgings?"

"She doesn't know where to come," replied Bevere; "I should not dare to tell her. She thinks I am in the doctor's house, and she does not know where that is. I have told her, and her Aunt Dyke has told her, that if ever she attempts to come after me there, I shall stop her allowance. Scott—you remember Richard Scott?"

"Of course."

"Well, Scott lives now near the Bell-and-Clapper: he is with a surgeon there. Scott goes to see her for me once a week, or so, and brings me news of her. I declare to you, Johnny Ludlow, that when I first catch sight of his face I turn to a cold shiver, dreading what he may have to say. And you talk about pulling-up! With such a wife as that, one is thankful to drown care once in a way."

"I—I suppose, Roger, nothing about her has ever come out *here?*"

He started up, his face on fire. "Johnny, lad, if it came out here—to my mother—to all of them—I should die. Say no more. The case is hopeless, and I am hopeless with it."

Anyway, it seemed hopeless to talk further then, and I took up my candle. "Just one more word, Roger: Does Lizzie know you have come down here? She might follow you."

His face took a look of terror. The bare idea scared him. "I say, don't you invent impossible horrors," gasped he. "She *couldn't* come; she has never heard of the place in connection with me. She has never heard anything about my people, or where they live, or don't live, or whether I have any. Good-night."

"Good-night, Roger."

And the final ending to it all will be told next month.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "The Cruise of the Reserve Squadron."

LIKE all other islands and countries, the Channel Islands have a past history of their own and a far-reaching pedigree.

The earliest known inhabitants were the Druids, whose presence is sufficiently attested by those huge monuments and remains which, even to this day, throw a weird and solemn influence upon mind and imagination. There must have been something grand and lofty about this people, who seem to have laid the foundation for many of the principles that have governed the succeeding world. And they must have owned a power we have not, and a patience we might seek in vain. For in these days how could we raise a Stonehenge, or carry a gigantic altar to the summit of a mountain? Full of poetry and romance, too, must have been those Druids; and to the Celts of to-day has their mantle descended. Less than half a century ago, more than fifty of these remains are said to have existed in Jersey, of which the greater part have been destroyed. The one at Anne Port, however, has luckily escaped the triumph of mind over matter, the nineteenth century march of intellect and improvement.

The Romans, who planted their foot everywhere, and everywhere seem to have set their seal, though not as the Druids, took the Channel Islands in their conquering march. The very name of Jersey is said to be a corruption of Cæsarea, a change certainly for the better. Eshcol would sooner have suited its character, since it undoubtedly yields a rich store of grapes. Like Canaan, too, it is a land flowing with milk. The Jersey cows increase and multiply, and emigrate to all parts of the world; especially to America, where now everything that is good finds its way. Honey we did not see, but probably not because it is not there.

Tout vient à qui sait attendre: and the time of the Saxons came in the sixth century, when Jersey was called Augia. The Danes followed, and then the Normans. William the Conqueror stepped into England, and the islands fell under British rule. With short interregnums, they have remained a portion of the British dominions ever since.

Suns rose and set, the stars moved on their course, centuries rolled on. James I. came to the throne; ecclesiastical matters woke into activity; the first Dean of Jersey received authority from the Bishop of Winchester. In 1779 the Prince of Nassau attempted to take Jersey, and landing in St. Ouen's Bay with six thousand men, was driven back.

In 1781 an attack, made by de Rullecourt, was, on the other hand, all but successful. Probably it would have been quite so but for the bravery of Major Pierson, who, at the age of five-and-twenty, proved himself a hero worthy of his country, and had he lived would no doubt have fulfilled an illustrious career. In January, 1781, the French landed a body of 1,200 men, surprised and took the town of St. Helier; the Governor was seized in bed, made prisoner, and forced to send an order to the troops commanding them to remain in barracks.

Pierson, however, disregarding the order, rapidly assembled his troops, and marched upon the French. They met and fought in the Royal Square, and the French were overcome. De Rullecourt fell, and, so, alas, did Pierson; the latter before he could know that his bravery had saved the island. De Rullecourt was buried in St. Helier's Churchyard, Pierson within the church itself. A monument was erected to his memory; the memory of one of the truest and bravest officers ever placed at the head of British troops.

Thenceforth the Channel Islands were to be left in peace. Wars and rumours of wars were to affect them no more. They might turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and give themselves up to the quiet pleasures of cultivation. The fruits of their labours are apparent. Scarcely a foot of ground in Jersey but seems turned to some profitable account. From the summit of Prince's Tower you may see the greater portion of the island. It looks as one large, flowering, fruitful garden, dotted about with rich pastures, where the Jersey cattle luxuriate; intersected by admirably-kept roads, and hedges from beginning to end neat and well-trimmed as if they enclosed the park of a fastidious owner. And we have seen that the inhabitants appreciate their privileges, and by beautiful and poetical names endeavour to impress upon themselves and others that their little island is not merely a fertile garden but an Arcadia.

So much, in few words, for the history of the island. This record shows no reason why the Jersey of to-day should not be prosperous. As we sow we reap. It is thus with the individual, and the history of any country is after all only the history of many individuals taken collectively. The inhabitants of Jersey, energetic and industrious, reap the fruits of their labours. The chief productions of the soil are potatoes and grapes, which are exported to the amount of many thousands of pounds. Apples and pears also yield a large harvest; and the Jersey pears, especially the Charmontel, are not only delicious, they are costly.

The apple orchards abound. When we were there the trees looked overladen, and yet the ground was strewed with windfalls—effect of the disastrous gale of the second of September. In many parts of the island, too, are large vineries; and it is worth a visit to Jersey to see the rich, ripe green and purple grapes hanging in countless

clusters within the glass houses. These are also exported, and one grower alone last year made a small fortune by his grape harvest.

But, to the visitor, the principal attraction of Jersey—as of all the Channel Islands—is the rocky coast. The whole of it may be seen in a few days, though it requires weeks to be appreciated. One may quickly learn the outlines of the rocks, and take in their height, depth and grandeur, mark the curves and crescents of the bays, and the way the blue sea rolls steadily in, to break at last in a long line of white, foamy surf. But the true enjoyment of all coast scenery is to view it in all shades and weathers; at sunrise, midday, sunset; to watch the light playing on sea and land; to mark the progress of the shadows; to lie in delicious solitude and abandonment with only the

On the Port, Jersey.

clang of the seagull to disturb one's reverie; to spend day after day upon the water, cruising in and out of the irregularities of the rocks; learning them by heart and taking them into the heart; to creep round their base and so form a true conception of their size and beauty; to land on a rock above high-water mark and revel in the plash and roar of the sea as it dashes around; to find out the caves and the hollow nooks, and the places where the wild birds build and scream and clang, and hatch their young, and teach them to fly.

Fairer day never dawned than our first Monday in Jersey—anything but a Black Monday to us. The car looked quiet, respectable and well organised, and without misgiving we took our seats beside the driver. The horses dashed through the town at express speed; the air was intoxicating. Soon the streets were left behind, and we mounted a steep hill, with a valley, almost a ravine, on the

left. To the right was a large building bought by the Jesuits, originally the Imperial Hotel, in size and importance eclipsing all other hotels in Jersey.

At the top of the hill we passed St. Saviour's Church, largest but not oldest in the island. Prince's Tower was our first halting-place. Grey walls overgrown with ivy gave it a romantic look, and whatever its age, it at least seemed very ancient. It is built on rising ground, surrounded by trees and wild tangle that in Jersey ought to be appreciated. From the top, you have a view of almost the whole island. Jersey lies before you like a fair garden, green and undulating, not hilly. Every inch of ground seems cultivated or otherwise utilised. Bordering the sea-shore, one traces a white line of steam,

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as the train goes to and fro on its short railway journey. Beyond, lies the shimmering water, with the rocks that rise thereout like pinnacles. Far away, right and left, are the white cliffs of France.

A very pleasant and lovely picture, bathed as it was in sunshine; whilst, over all, the blue sky threw its magic influence. But we could not linger long; nor was it necessary; and soon the car was once more bowling through green lanes, between tall hedges. On Saturday we had been below them, now we were above: commanded wayside houses and green fields; felt ourselves superior to the cabbage stalks.

Straight across to Bouley Bay; one of the prettiest, wildest, most romantic parts of the island. Here a wooded valley or ravine was almost grand, reminding one in a small way of some of the Black Forest scenery. It swept down to the sea, where a single house overlooked the calm waters in stately solitude. The cliffs were high, bold and substantial.

Next came Rozel Bay with a still lovelier view, perhaps because it was more elevated. Here we went over what was called a tropical garden : a pretty, somewhat wild and broken plantation on the side of the cliff. Though the month was October, roses bloomed, and the magnolia spread out its creamy flowers and shed forth its luscious scent. Palm trees and tall Indian grass helped the gardens to their reputation, but we saw nothing much more tropical than this.

We entered from below and climbed upwards through winding paths and over miniature bridges until we stood on gorsy heights, and overlooked a glorious view. Breezes came from over the sea, more bracing and refreshing than the sleepy hollow; blooming heather yielded to the tread. Below, warm and sheltered, was the small Rozel Inn, where we were supposed to lunch. The car was at rest in the yard, the horses had disappeared within the stables. The sea, sparkling with loveliest and most vivid colours, came up to within a few yards, and rolled over the sand with a lazy sound intensely soothing and delicious. One could only feel how reviving it would be, what an existence, to stay awhile in this quiet resting-place, come up by day with a favourite book, and lounge away the hours on these breezy heights, revelling in sunshine and blue sky, sea and cliffs, whose outlines might be traced so far. Quite close, white and glistening, looked the coast of France, not so many miles away either, as the crow flies.

It was hard to return to sea level; to lose the pure wind of heaven, that swept over the heights and "cooled one's fevered brow." Only one other part of Jersey charmed me as did Rozel Bay : Grève de Lecq, to be mentioned by-and-by.

The inn was equal to the occasion, had even a choice of luncheons; and we found a small room just large enough for two, and a table decorated with a snow-white cloth. A maiden, not all forlorn or downcast, attended to one's needs, and put down in triumph a well-furnished dish of native oysters. But Jersey, it is said, was once more famous for its oysters than it is now. The beds do not yield as they did, supply has not equalled demand. The world, some declare, is getting old and worn out. Yet this cannot apply to its population. That is ever on the increase; and presently it would almost seem that new-comers will have to stand outside the edge of the world, to make room for those within it. Perhaps a new sense will be given them—a power to tread upon air.

Rising out of the sea were groups of rocks known as the Paternosters, the Dirouilles, and the Ecrehous; and as this coast is one of the most picturesque portions of Jersey, so is it one of the most dangerous. But Rozel Bay is small; much smaller than that of Bouley, which has a fine sweep of its own. Fishing-boats were moored in the little harbour ready to go out with the next tide. The water was so clear and bright that quite far out one could see the bottom. Shells there were none to speak of, but fragments of rock

lay about, jasper, agate, and cornelian. As usual, we gathered a pocketful of mementoes, to be—again as usual—discarded when the collection had assumed gigantic proportions, and consigned to the tender mercies of a chamber-maid, whose sympathies with such collections are seldom strongly developed.

Presently the car was once more in readiness, and if the horses did not exactly paw the ground with thorough-bred impatience, they were at least ready for their work. The jovial conductor summoned his scattered flock with a shrill whistle, that reminded one of the signal to which London cabmen are wont to respond. But, at the last moment, a black sheep was usually found to have wandered, and delays often ensued.

Our conductor was not only amiable, but musical, and, as the novels of a past generation would have expressed it, accompanied himself beautifully on the pianoforte. Fortunately he did not trouble us with songs on the road. He sometimes carried a roll of music with him, with which, at different halting-places (pianos abounded everywhere) he entertained his audience: and if two of them failed to swell the number of his hearers and escaped to explore the bays and the cliffs, and watch the ebb and flow of that beautiful and eternal sea, he did not take it amiss, or, more probably, never remarked their absence. That was one great feature of our excursions on the car, impossible at any other time of the Jersey "season": we were practically as much to ourselves as if we had been in sole possession of the Shandaradan: might converse at will with our fellow travellers, or confine our remarks to the driver or to each other. The conductor was, however, not one of the silent men of earth, and in a monastery would probably have spent one half his life in talking, and the other half in penances for broken rules. His facetious observations drew forth many a smile, and once raised a laugh against a middle-aged spinster of the Charles Dickens type, with flat curls, a pinched face, a small waist, a basket, and a big umbrella that was always getting into the way of her neighbours, right and left. The conductor had gravely assured her that an unmistakably modern windmill we happened to be passing, had been erected by Julius Cæsar for the use of his household.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the credulous lady. "Pray, sir, to what do you attribute this wonderful preservation?"

"To the purity of the air, ma'am," replied the conductor. "People never grow old here, and buildings never decay. London, for instance, is quite different. It is well-known that Cleopatra's Needle has suffered more damage in the short time it has adorned the banks of the Thames than during all its previous existence. In the course of the next century it is expected that the whole of it will be floating through space in infinite particles."

"Dear! dear!" cried the lady once more. "I must really think about settling down here, and making Jersey my head-quarters."

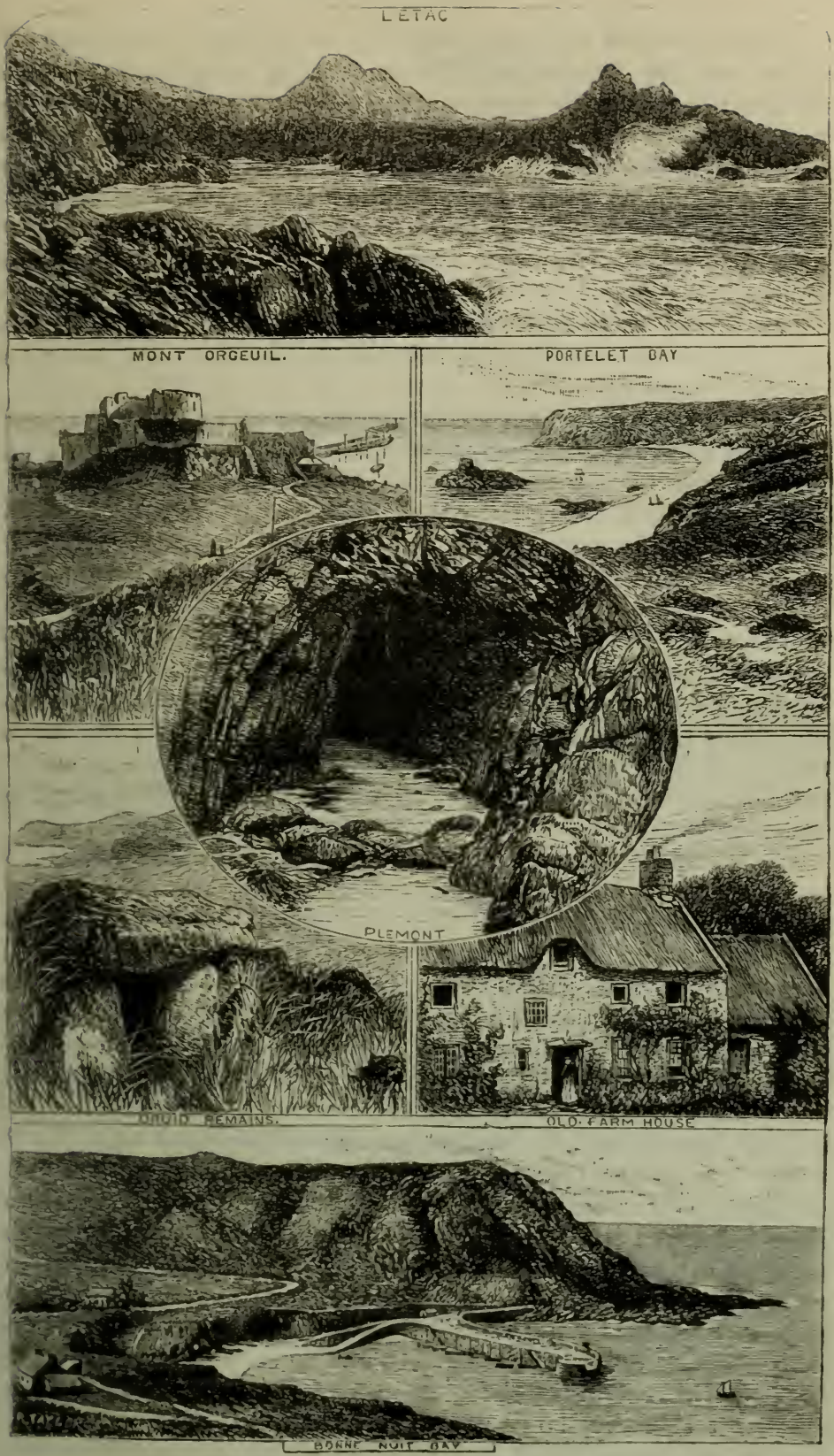
"Quite time you did, ma'am," replied the conductor, who, to do him justice, appeared not to see all that his words implied. But a general laugh could not be avoided, and the irate lady strongly suspecting that a compliment had not been paid her, took her revenge, and flourished down her umbrella upon her next neighbour's toes with a vigour that brought at least one heartless laugh to an untimely end.

But we are straying from Rozel Bay. The wandering sheep having turned up, seats were resumed; the driver—who, opposed to the conductor, was somewhat grave and silent — whipped up his horses, and away we dashed up-hill, over the hard, white, well-kept road. We bowled through narrow, picturesque Jersey lanes, where now and then trees overarched; past old farm-houses with ecclesiastical-looking gateways in the outer walls in the early English style or the Norman; until, on nearing Anne Port, we swept round by the Druidical remains.

The car made no pause, but H. and I had seen and revelled in them on Saturday. They were very perfect of their kind, giving out their influence to a marked degree. Though small, they bear long contemplation, and will take you back in imagination to those far-off times when the Druids were yet a people of the earth, and worshipped here in their rude form, but to the best of their lights.

Mont Orgueil, now boldly overlooking the sea, had then no existence; nor yet the houses now scattered about as tokens of life and civilization; neither the small church that stood in that quaint nook by the road side, symbol and result of Divine revelation. But it was strange, even to mystery, to go back in thought to days when island, and sea and sky were all as now; to that sun which day by day had declined as it was declining now; age after age rolling onwards with no change in sky or stars, things above the earth or things under the earth: change only in mankind, race giving place to race, and over all, the inevitable law of progress.

But to-day the car kept on its way; the travellers seemed satisfied with a passing view. We went on downhill towards the castle, in full view of the small town of Gorey, the harbour, and the sea that gleamed and shimmered like the changing colours of an opal. Then a halt within the precincts of Mont Orgueil. But having gone over it on Saturday we had no desire for a second inspection. So whilst the little band of excursionists (including one or two newly-married couples, who trod upon air) mounted the rugged pathway to the castle, H. and I went off to Cæsar's Tower, and from the picturesque ruin absorbed the beauty of sea and sky, the small harbour with its fishing boats, the long coast line, point beyond point, the more distant French shores. The rocks below us were steep, and broken, and beautiful; round to our left stretched the greensward, a few fishermen's cottages bordered the shore. Yet further, stretched out St. Catherine's breakwater, begun by the government as a harbour, and abandoned after much labour and cost.


L'ETAC
MONT ORGEUIL.
PORTELET BAY
PLEMONT
DRUID REMAINS.
OLD FARM HOUSE
BONNE NUIT BAY

Then round on the soft green turf at the side of the castle, we made our way to the little French-looking village, with its long straight row of houses bordering the quay. We had it and its little pier to ourselves. It was as quiet as a place abandoned. No sign of life anywhere, except on the little Government steamer, where the men were rubbing up the brass work in a lazy, good-tempered sort of way peculiar to their kind. Our car rested on its oars in front of the only inn the place seemed to possess—probably more than sufficient for the demands imposed upon Gorey. "Ici on loge à pied et à cheval," must have been almost a superfluous announcement; and certainly the outlook upon the harbour mud at low water was not an enticing prospect.

Nevertheless, there was something quaint about Gorey, and the irregular houses at right angles with the long, straight road relieved the stiffness of the better portion of the village. There was a brightness about it; and you had only to cast your eyes upwards at the venerable castle, which literally threw its shadow across the village, and the place at once became not only bright, but romantic, historical, dignified.

There was life, too, as we looked now, for the sightseers, with conductor at their head and custodian in the rear, were wending their way down the narrow, broken path, one behind another, like an orderly string of turkeys. A great height it seemed, for the descent to the harbour is steep and abrupt, disclosing wonderful views of extraordinary back-yards, and small gardens that possibly might become Arcadias, but certainly were at present waste places.

I often think—to digress slightly—that back gardens retired from public gaze are an index to their owners' minds and characters and will tell you whether they are well or ill-trained. And how important is a well-trained mind, with order and system largely developed! What a difference it makes to life; not only to the individual, but to those who have to live with him. A place for everything, and everything in its place. A time for all things, also. How easily it causes the wheels of life's machinery to move along; how calmly life's current flows towards the great sea that awaits it at the end!

Down came the little band, and soon we were once more on the wing. Up dashed the car through the village, followed by a posse of urchins who yelled lustily for half-pence, with a persistence that almost deserved reward. We turned round by the coast road, passing amongst other institutions a manufactory for cider, where they were crushing apples with an energy denoting a brisk trade. Oyster beds may fail, and coal mines cease to yield, but the earth brings forth abundantly her many harvests, and in spite of the blue ribbon the world in general has not gone in for total abstinence. Nor do I see why it should. To people are given all things richly to enjoy, if they will only eat and drink in moderation, giving thanks. Vine growers and cider makers may work with energy and without fear.

The sun was going down in splendour. All day long the sky had been cloudless. Shadows were falling athwart the landscape, relieving it from the flatness of midday. Tones and colours deepened. The sea rolled in a sort of liquid rainbow. It broke and plashed about the rocks in little eddies and white foam. The train from Gorey passed us and went on its road to St. Helier. Ours was the better way. Nothing could have been pleasanter, more restoring to tired nerves than this travelling through the air hour after hour, with just sufficient stoppage to break the monotony, and give a fresh current to one's thoughts. Towards five o'clock we found ourselves once more in the busy town. The car dashed through the narrow streets at an alarming pace, and with tremendous clatter. By degrees its passengers were disposed of, and last of all it landed us safe and sound at Bree's Stopford Hotel. Nothing, from beginning to end, could have been pleasanter than the day. The weather contributed much to this. It was more perfect and Arcadian than weather can often be on earth. The air sparkled with sunshine and light and laughter; zephyrs blew a soft, intoxicating breeze; one felt in Paradise; an experience only to be found amidst the beauties of nature on such perfect days. Nothing else will give it; not the finest picture that ever was painted, or the sweetest song that ever was sung, or the best poem that ever was written. For he who is in harmony with these beauties seems raised into intimate communion with the world unseen.

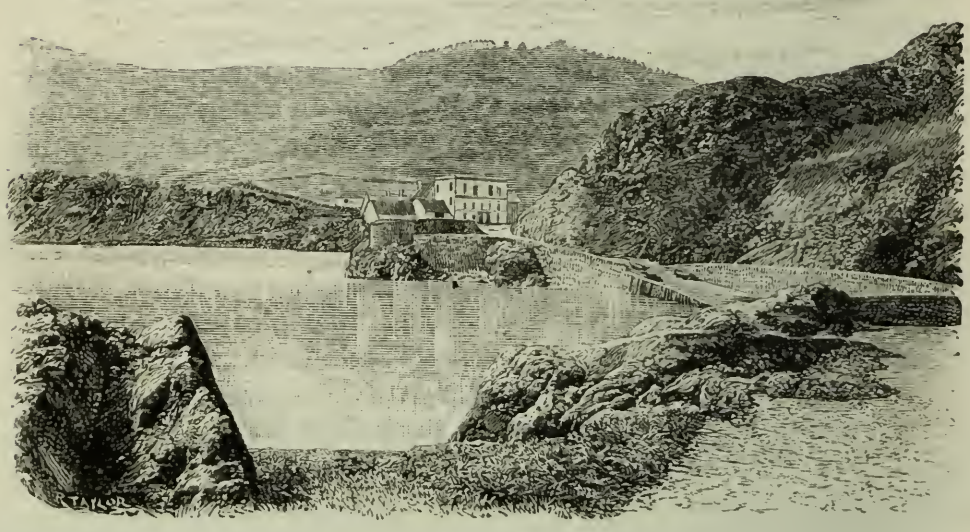
Evening and table d'hôte succeeded to the pleasures of the day. Again we were amused by the manners and customs of the visitors. Newly-married couples were in force; and the more ancient, who had dreamed their dream, and to whom these days were in the long ago, seemed to enjoy the happiness of those who as yet were not disillusioned.

That night there was to be a grand representation at the circus, patronised by the élite of Jersey from the governor downwards. It was reported good—and being the only form of dissipation then going on, was extensively frequented. So much so that the manager, out of the fulness of his heart, that night began a little speech by way of returning thanks, opening it in a familiar and friendly way with the words "My dear Governor," in the course of which he grew somewhat confused; gave up one evening's proceeds to a specified charity; and then, warming with his subject and waxing impulsive, on the spot extended the stay of the circus yet one more evening, "the proceeds of which should be devoted"—here he came to a perplexed pause, cleverly rounded off at last by—"to another charity hereafter to be decided on."

We thought we also would go and see the horsemanship, and laugh at the clowns, and applaud the cleverness of the riders. Accordingly we plunged into the mazes of St. Helier. The night was dark and we were bold. By this time I had found out that H.'s "bump of locality" was a mere delusion as far as this place was concerned, and I made en-

quiries at our first doubtful point. It seemed more dignified to ask for the Marine Hotel than for the circus, and I entered a shop with a gravity befitting a professor's chair. It did not answer. Nothing ever does with some people, except the downright, straightforward course, even in the most trifling matters. I speak with authority, and from personal experience. Some people have only to sneeze, and if they particularly wish it kept secret, in less than a week the news will have laughed to scorn the great wall of China, and penetrated into the interior.

So "the lady who kept the shop"—as schoolboys say—was too clever for us. Dissipation was writ upon our faces, and our artfully-concealed purpose was to her as clear as daylight. "I suppose you



BOULEY BAY.

want the circus," she said, without any point of interrogation, and with a condescending tone it was impossible to resent; and we confessed her a woman of discernment. Then followed directions to turn nine times to the right and eight times to the left, and cross a square at right angles, and go straight down past the hospital, and we should in time reach the esplanade and the show. Flaring torches, a brass band, and a gaping, wide-mouthed, waddling crowd would announce its precise locality.

We worked out this problem mathematically, and were rewarded: more than ever thankful for having pitched our tent in Bree's Hotel. All round about, it was a species of Bedlam broken loose, with the disadvantage of its continuing, since there were no keepers to restore order.

One swallow is very much like another swallow, and the rule applies to circuses. But not every circus erects a throne for a

governor, and prepares its bills on white satin. The performance was excellent, the clowns were witty, and fair equestrians jumped through hoops and burst the bonds of an alarming amount of tissue paper. Everybody was amiable and appreciative, and when the end came, and the audience were dismissed to the strains of the National Anthem, it was a truly loyal crowd that dispersed to the four quarters of St. Helier. There is nothing like putting people into a good humour to set them glowing with themselves and all around them, and bring out their best qualities and good emotions.

We walked home under the starshine. Wonderfully bright and flashing were these heavenly bodies. No sooner do you get away

NEAR GRÈVE DE LECQ.

from this good old England than the fact strikes you, and the stars arrest your attention. We must pay for our privileges. A heavy atmosphere makes living not half the existence it is in purer climes. There we tread on air, and life, apart from its care and fret—that old man of the sea that we most of us have to carry on our backs—is one long, happy day. We see things at their best, and all that is noble in man appears to come uppermost, and Heaven seems nearer.

I have mentioned Grève de Lecq as being the spot that impressed me in Jersey next to Rozel. For a sojourn of any length one would even give it the preference. There was something indefinably attractive about its small bay and substantial stone pier, the fine heights on either side, the rocks and points of land beyond. It was delicious to lie upon the reddish sands that threw a sort of glow over everything, and listen to the surging of the incoming tide, or the ripple of an inland stream that here emptied itself into the sea. We had

reached it through a lovely avenue of trees, small, certainly, but beautiful, that arched and met overhead and admitted gleams and glints of sunshine more lovely than the sun's full glare. On the one hand the trees extended to quite a plantation, on the other a grassy valley spread its fertile slopes and sheltered the grave-looking cows that limped about with a leg and a horn fastened to each other, so that they might not knock off the apples from the trees that would otherwise have been at their mercy.

Then down near the water there was a comfortable hotel built of light wood. I think it was called the Pavilion, and consisted, apparently, of one large room and a few bed-rooms above. But it was bright and cheerful, and reminded one of the pleasant houses in Norway. All these influences have a correspondingly good effect upon the mind. It was all well-appointed; admirable cooking; no fault to be found with anything. The owner appeared above his present station, and I was told was so. I could not help thinking that to spend a time in retirement here in May or October; to lie day after day upon the sands, listening to the sea, undisturbed by tourists; to roam at will about the rocks and hills, and paddle one's canoe in and out of the bays and curves—what a delight it would be! I longed to give it a trial; to spend here even a week; to drink in all that ozone, absorb all those flashes of colour, all that sunshine and pure atmosphere. But, with the amount of time at command, this luxury and delight was impossible. Some future day, perhaps, it might be. And then—would it be the same?—blue skies and laughing hours? "Before I come, or after I am gone, the roses always bloom."

Grève de Lecq was the Ultima Thule of our second day's excursion, and we returned through St. Peter's Valley: wildest, most wooded, most romantic valley in Jersey: really deserving the name, with its velvet slopes, running streams, and wooded heights. No other valley in Jersey will compare with it. If it did not reach the point of grandeur, it certainly did that of great beauty. In comparison with the size of the island, its extent was considerable. Here and there felled trees lay upon the ground, with the picturesque effect they always have. Now a slight distance of brushwood opened up, and now we passed one of those wells that are a feature in Jersey scenery. Finally, at the end of the valley, we came upon tall factory chimneys that seemed to have no business there, and certainly, like gangmen in frosty weather, appeared to have no work to do. Silent, desolate, and deserted they looked. An old water-mill, with its dilapidated wheel, was much more in harmony with its surroundings.

Plémont was our chief pièce de résistance on the third day. The hotel stands high and dry on the very summit of the cliff, overlooking the sea. In summer, you have a glorious air, bracing as any part of Jersey can be, but cold and bleak in midwinter, dreary and desolate. The view far and near was splendid. All the Channel

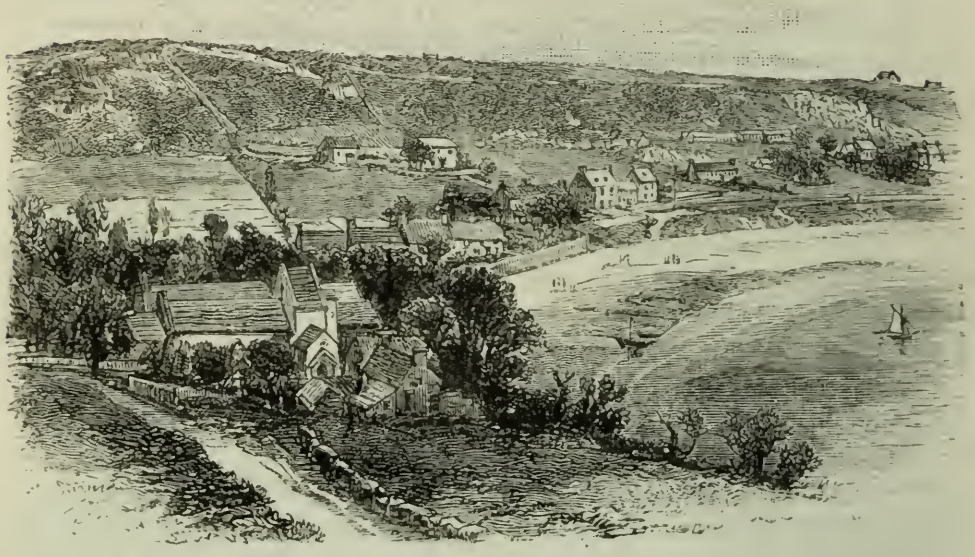
Islands were visible, rising sleepily out of the calm and lovely water: Guernsey, Sark, and Alderney, and the little islets of Herm and Jethou. The Paternosters lay to the right: a reef of dangerous rocks that must often have been less kind than cruel, unworthy of their name.

Anyone writing a guide to Jersey might make the record "Plémont, famous for its lobsters:" for late as the season was, the inn furnished some splendid specimens. But it is famous for more than that. The rocks are grand and precipitous. There are caves, too, only to be entered at low water. A small bridge spans a chasm, below which you may jump from rock to rock and point to point, down to the sandy beach. Of the caves I can say nothing. We saw them not. The "cruel, crawling tide," though receding, was still too high to admit of investigation. And though we stayed some time, it was too high for our purpose up to the very last. So like the fox with the grapes, we consoled ourselves with the idea that caves after all are disappointing, not repaying one half the time for the trouble of groping about in the dark, the danger of plunging head-first into a pool of icy water, or of dashing one's brains out against a sharp bit of rock lying in wait for the unwary.

The rocks here were perhaps the finest we saw in Jersey. A small waterfall tumbled over the cliffs, with, in rainy weather, possibly a fine effect. Waterfalls are not the strong point of Jersey, any more than its trees. But we cannot have everything, and Jersey has sufficient attraction in its coast scenery, its lanes and its lovely sea, the delicious productions of its soil, and its interesting, soft-eyed cows. A great deal of the coast might be traced from Plémont; bays and points stretching out in fine bold outlines. Just round the further point was St. Owen's, largest of all the Jersey bays.

Our last halting-place that day—St. Brelade's Bay, with its ancient church dating back to the 12th century—was also one of the most interesting. The white sands are firm and pleasant, and the sea rolls steadily up over a sloping beach. Here, whilst H. and I explored the shore, we found the excursionists grouping themselves round the car in telling attitudes, before the hotel. At first we almost fancied they were about to break into a part song, like German students out for a day's ramble; and an unknown individual who superintended the pastures might have been the leader. But it soon appeared that all these preparations were photographic; an infliction that has often been sensibly compared to tooth drawing. To spare ourselves the pain and penalty of refusing our jovial conductor, who was looking about him as if he felt rather than saw the absence of certain of his flock, we extended our walk upon the sands beyond a friendly point of rock. Here we were close to the church and the tombs, and, like Hervey, might have meditated upon the vanity of human life and the fading of human hopes. But we did nothing of the kind. We threw pebbles into the water and enjoyed the bubbles and the rings and the splashes, and revelled in

all the beauty that surrounded us and made glad the heart. When we returned, the inquisitor with his black pall and dark instrument of torture had retired, and the charmed groups had ceased to attitudinise. They were, indeed, preparing to mount, and before long we were whirling through St. Aubyn's Bay, making good way towards St. Helier. We entered it by the Esplanade. Elizabeth Castle lay to our right, and the rocky shore was flat and dry and strewed with seaweed. Opposite the circus was the little railway station that rejoiced in the name of Cheapside, and conjured up sudden visions of crowded thoroughfares and the bustle and wear of a great city. As before, the car gradually dismissed its freight, ending with Bree's Hotel.



St. Brelade's Bay.

Three days of unalloyed pleasure and profit. Days of wonderful weather: weather that comes to us in our dreams, and in the choicest climes of earth, where even the easterly winds have a kindly touch. We never had any more days like them. Even when the sky was blue, and the sun shone, that nameless, indescribable charm which seems to belong to paradise, and is only now and then lent to earth, was absent. These are the days which haunt us through life, and stand out above others; and we look back upon them, and feel that the world was fair, and we were young, and all was happiness and hope, and everything would last for ever. And when the days come of realities and disenchantment, when the sunshine has lost its glow for ever, and the moonlight its poetry, we wrap ourselves in the memory of the past, and hope that it will all come back to us in the unseen world of eternal youth, where sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Our time came for saying good-bye to Jersey. We left rather sooner than we had intended, because on a certain day a boat left at 10 a.m. for Weymouth, and all other days the Southampton boat left at half-past seven. This necessitated getting up in the dark, and turning out in the cold: an unpleasant alternative one avoids when possible. It was an exquisite morning, warm as summer. Never had the sea been more placid. Not a breath stirred its surface. The tide was not high, and the steamer lay outside the harbour. We had to reach it in a small boat, and were amused at the agonies of a lady whose box had not turned up, and who refused to budge an inch without her treasure. The boatmen offered to make a second journey for it, which only made her yet more frantic. At length it appeared,

St. Aubyn's Bay.

and turned out large enough to contain Jumbo, and very nearly drowned us all.

But at last we were safely on board the little paddle boat, and soon after ten o'clock she set sail. As on approaching, so now in leaving we steered near to, and traced the rocky coast, but with greater interest and with a more intimate acquaintance. We had cause to leave it with regret, for our days there had been days of unalloyed pleasure. H. fondly looked down at some of our luggage under the bridge, where reposed our cabbage stalks in all their ugliness and all their pride. Mementoes certainly, but the least interesting part of Jersey; libels, in fact, upon the island.

We were now on our way to Guernsey. But there is a time and place for all things. The end of a day's march is the season for repose; and the end of a paper cannot be made the introduction to fresh ground. Guernsey must wait until next month, and it can afford to bide its time.

DR. BALL.

By the Author of "Molly Bawn."

HE was a very little man, with a cherubic face, and a large soul, and nothing at all awe-inspiring about him. His eyes shone through his glasses anxiously, as though in eager search of any good that might be lying about amongst his parishioners. He thought no evil of any man and, in truth, no man thought evil of him.

He had been twenty years a curate, but had never sighed for higher wage or betrayed a hankering for the flesh-pots of Egypt. Contented he was and happy amongst his ungrateful old women and surly old men. He went to bed at eight o'clock, or half past; he never went into society: indeed, there was hardly any into which to go in the benighted Irish village in which he lived. He knew as little about the subtle changes that creep now and again into fashionable life, as the South Sea Islander.

Dulcinea—a charming girl of eighteen, and a great heiress, his friend and godchild—would often walk down to his cottage to see him, but he would seldom go to her. He would never dine from home, but sometimes he would take from Dulcinea's hand the cup of tea she had ready for him at all hours of the day, knowing it to be his one carnal delight.

His Rector was old and infirm, and for the most part resided in Italy. In fact, the little doctor did all the work of Inchinabagga, which was the somewhat outlandish name of his parish.

Dulcinea, with an unpardonable play upon his name, had christened him her Candy-ball: saying in excuse that she had a right to give him any name she pleased because he had given her hers—which did not please her—at the font, many winters ago now.

"Yet, after all I don't think my sobriquet suits you: candy-balls are such *hard* things," she said, tenderly, as she walked with him up and down his little garden-path one morning in mid-winter, hugging his arm the while. "I'm sure I have nearly smashed all my teeth with them over and over again. And you, with your tender heart could never hurt me or any living thing. I know—and Gerald says it too—that you are the best and dearest man in all the world."

Having exploded this little shell, she waited somewhat anxiously for the result.

"Now—now—I am afraid you have been writing to Gerald again," said the Doctor, stopping in his walk and regarding her with what he believed to be severity.

"Yes, I have," said Miss Vane, promptly. "Isn't it good of me to

tell you the truth out quite plainly? I'll tell you something else, too. If you say even one small scolding word to me, I shall run away from you, and you shan't see me again for a week."

"Dear me, dear me, this is terrible!" said the Doctor, almost tragically.

Now, Miss Dulcinea Vane, besides being an heiress, was also the Bishop's ward. And the Bishop was sternly desirous of doing his duty by her—which meant turning a cold shoulder on all needy young men who paid their addresses to her. Their name was Legion, so that the poor Bishop had by no means a good time of it.

There had come nothing serious of it all, however, until about six months ago, when Gerald Wygram had descended upon Inchinabagga as if from the clouds. He said he had come for the fishing, which was excellent in the neighbourhood; but having seen Miss Vane one day in the curate's garden, his desire for trout suddenly died a natural death, and his desire for something else grew into a mighty longing. He was a tall young man, handsome, and, worse than all, eloquent. He talked Dulcinea's heart out of her body, before she woke to the knowledge that she had one.

There was absolutely no fault to be found with him beyond the fact that he was the fifth son of a by-no-means wealthy Baronet. This was a sin past forgiveness in everybody's eyes, except Dulcinea's. She was reasoned with, expostulated with, *threatened*. All to no good.

The Bishop in a long letter—exquisitely written and perfectly worded—finally *commanded* Miss Vane to cease to think again of this Gerald Wygram (this clerk in the Foreign Office, with a paltry stipend) for even one moment! To which Dulcinea sent a meek reply, to the effect that as usual her guardian's behests should be obeyed to the letter. She would indeed *never* think of Gerald Wygram again for that insignificant portion of time called a moment, but daily, hourly, until the family vault claimed her for its own. Whereupon the Bishop wrote to Doctor Ball, as her spiritual adviser, begging him to bring her to a proper frame of mind, and to see, generally, what was to be done.

It was wonderful how little *could* be done; and Dulcinea would promise nothing. So Sir Watkyn Wygram, Gerald's father, was written to; and he, though mightily amused at the whole affair, took the law into his own hands, and ordered Gerald to leave Inchinabagga without delay.

There were certain reasons why it was best to obey this order, and so, with many kisses and vows of eternal constancy, the lovers parted. They felt their constancy might be put to the test, as Dulcinea was barely eighteen, and by her late father's will, was not to come of age until her twenty-third year. Five years to wait! An eternity to an impatient heart!—A month's trial having proved to them that life

without each other was an earthly Purgatory, they resolved to try one more expedient to soften the man in the apron and the long silk stockings.

"What is terrible?" asked Dulcinea of the Curate, as they walked up and down the garden.

"This correspondence with Gerald, when you *know* the Bishop ——"

"Well, I won't do it again," she said. "It would be a stupid thing to write to him, wouldn't it," continued Dulcinea, innocently, "when I can see him every day?"

"*See* him!" Dr. Ball stopped short again, and gazed at her over his glasses. "Why you don't mean to tell me that ——"

"Yes I do, indeed. He is staying down at the white cottage just like last spring. He says he has come for the fishing."

"Fishing in January!"

"Well, if it isn't for that, it is for something else. And you can't think how nice he is looking. And he is so fond of you! Do you know you were the very first person he asked for."

"Did he now!" said the Doctor, with a broadly gratified smile. Then he recollected himself, and brought himself back to a proper frame of mind with the help of a dry little cough. "The Bishop and Sir Watkyn will be greatly annoyed," he said.

"I don't care," returned Dulcinea, rebelliously. "What fault can the Bishop find with him?"

"He is not your equal, my dear."

"I hope you are not growing worldly?" said Dulcinea, with a severity that to the poor doctor sounded very terrible.

"But he is *very* poor, my dear," he said, faltering, and feeling himself the most worldly creature on earth.

"And is his poverty the only thing against him?"

"The Bishop has other objections."

"Oh! I know all about that," said she, with superb disdain. "I know he has been meanly trying to spy out some trumpery little peccadilloes belonging to poor Gerald's Oxford days. It is my belief the Bishop did far worse himself when *he* was at Oxford. I hate a spy!"

"But, my dear ——"

"And if Gerald was a little bit wild at college—I—I—think it was *delightful* of him! I can't bear goody-goody young men. I should quite despise him if I thought he had never done anything he oughtn't to do."

"Dulcinea, this is horrible!" said the Doctor. "If your guardian ——"

"I know my guardian," with a contemptuous shrug of her pretty little shoulders—"and you would, too, only you are too good to fathom his schemes. Do you think a real Christian would forbid two people to be happy? No, you don't. A real Christian would

help them to be happy. And—" turning to him suddenly, with a quick, radiant smile—"you *will* help us?" She spoke with an amount of assurance she was far from feeling, but determined to play her last card with a high courage. "You will go to the Bishop yourself, and plead for us. He respects you (it is the only sign of grace about him); he will listen to you, and you will bring us back word that you have succeeded. You will give us that bad old man's blessing; we shall fall upon your neck and embrace you, and then you will marry us."

"Stop—stop," said the Doctor. "I daren't do this thing. The Bishop's face is set against Gerald, and ——"

"Then you are to set your face against the Bishop's and turn his in favour of Gerald. Yes, you must indeed! Oh! my dear godfather, you have never refused me anything in all my life; do not begin to do so now. Tell him I am sick, dying ——"

"But, my dear girl, I never saw you looking better."

"Never mind, I shall *get* sick; tell him, too, that Gerald is such a regular attendant at church, and that ——"

"I *can't*, Dulcinea. All last spring, Sunday after Sunday, I missed his head in the Rectory pew, where he was supposed to sit."

All the pews in the church at Inchinabagga were so built that only the heads of the parishioners could be seen, staring over them as if impaled.

"Perhaps he *was* there, but sitting low," said Dulcinea, mendaciously.

"No. He wasn't sitting there at all," said the curate sorrowfully. "He was up the South stream, at Owen's farm, fishing for trout."

"Well, even if he was," said Gerald's sweetheart, boldly, "surely there was some excuse for him. Sundays should not be good fishing days, and on every one of those you mention the trout were literally jumping out of the water, and crying to be caught! He told me so. Why, the Bishop himself would have gone fishing on such days."

"I must request, Dulcinea ——"

"Well, if he wouldn't, he would have been dying to go—it is all the same," said Miss Vane, airily. "Come, you will go to the Bishop—you will do what you can for us, won't you?"

"What," nervously, "am I to say if I *do* go. Mind, I have not promised."

"Say that Gerald is worthier of me than I am of Gerald. That will be a good beginning; be *sure* you say that. Make me out a most perverse girl, of whom you can get *no* good ——"

"Dulcinea," said the Doctor, with mournful reproach, "in all these years have I failed to show you the graciousness of truth?"

"Oh! but what is the truth in comparison with Gerald!" said Miss Vane, with an impatient gesture of the right hand.

Quite overwhelmed by this last proof of the uselessness of his ministry, Dr. Ball maintained a crushed silence.

"You will say just what I have told you—won't you?" asked Dulcinea, anxiously.

"I shall say you have certain faults I would gladly see amended," said the Curate, sadly; "but I cannot bring myself to malign you, Dulcinea, and, of course, the Bishop knowing you—though slightly—must have formed an opinion of his own about you."

"He is such an old bore," said Miss Vane, irreverently, "that I don't believe he could form an opinion on *any* subject." In which she wronged the Bishop.

"I must beg you won't speak of your Bishop like that," said the Curate earnestly. "He has been of much service to the Church. He is a great and good man. Well," he continued, with a sigh, after a pause, "I will go to him and intercede for you. I shall write and ask him for an interview—but I doubt if good will come of it. And what shall I do there, in a strange place, amongst strange faces, after all these years?"

In truth, it seemed a terrible thing to him, this undertaking. He would have to leave his home, for the first time these ten years, and go beyond his beloved boundary, and launch himself, as it were, upon the world.

But he wrote to the Bishop, nevertheless, asking for an interview, without stating the object he had in view, and received a very friendly letter from that dignitary in return, who, indeed, was a very kindly man, au fond, and most wilfully misunderstood by Dulcinea. The Bishop granted Dr. Ball the desired interview with pleasure, and begged he would come to the Palace early in the ensuing week, not on business alone, but as a guest for a day or two.

On the Monday following Dr. Ball rose betimes, and having shaved himself with extra care, and donned his best clothes, (oh! that he should have to call them so!) he started for the cathedral town in the heaviest snowstorm they had known that year.

On entering the episcopal drawing-room he found there, not only the Bishop and his wife, Mrs. Craik, but a goodly company of guests. He was at first bewildered by the lights, and the fine small chatter, and the frou-frou of the silken gowns, and in his progress up the room fell over several chairs and tables. But presently he came to his senses and a comfortable ottoman close to his hostess—a handsome woman with great kindly eyes and a delicious voice.

He saw that she was pouring out tea, and that everyone was drinking it. He saw, too, that there was a good deal of cake going about, and thin bread-and-butter, and some delicate wafery little things he had never seen before. He glanced at the ormolu clock on the chimney-piece behind him, and saw it was nearly six o'clock. "And a very reasonable hour for tea, too," he said to himself, complacently, and ate a good deal more bread-and-butter, and told himself the tea was excellent. He looked round him and beamed through his glasses

at the pretty girls in their charming gowns, and declared them to his heart a sight worth seeing. Two or three of them, struck by the benevolence of his smile, smiled back at him, so that his satisfaction was complete.

Then a dismal, booming sound came from the hall. The Doctor started on hearing it, and nearly dropped his cup of sèvres.

"The gong," said a little woman near him, getting up with graceful languor from her chair.

"First bell! Who would have thought it was so late?" said a tall, pretty girl. "How time does fly sometimes!" The Doctor in a vague way had noticed that this last speaker had had a young man whispering to her for the last half-hour.

Then, as if by magic, everyone seemed to disappear. They melted away through the open doorway before his very eyes. *Where* were they going? To their rooms? The little Doctor who had been puzzled by his afternoon tea, an entirely new custom to him—now grew mildly speculative and somewhat bewildered. Seeing the signs of hesitation that enshrouded him, the Bishop went up to him, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"You will like to go too," he said, kindly, "after your long drive." There were no trains in those days to or from Inchinabagga.

"Certainly, my lord," said Dr. Ball, mildly; "but where?"

"Why, to your room," said the Bishop.

"Ah! to be sure," returned the Doctor. Then he shook hands with the Bishop, rather to that good man's surprise, and would probably have performed the same ceremony with Mrs. Craik, but she had disappeared.

The lamps were lighted everywhere, and a tall servant in powder handed him a silver candlestick at his bed-room door, to which haven he had conducted him. Inside, the bed-room fire was burning brilliantly, and the Doctor sinking into an arm-chair gave himself up to thought. He meant to arrange his speech about Dulcinea's engagement to be delivered to-morrow, but somehow his thoughts wandered.

"Evidently they dine early"—(they took this form at last)—"*Evidently*. I suppose they thought *I* did too, but I depended on getting something here. A mutton chop now, or even a little bit of cold mutton with my tea—it *is* a long drive, as he said himself." Not that it mattered really. They had all been kind, *most* kind; Mrs. Craik especially. Beautiful woman, Mrs. Craik. He was a little, perhaps—well—a little hungry certainly, but a good night's rest is better than meat or drink; and he had often been hungry before when on a long day's tramp; and better be hungry and receive such a kind reception as had been accorded him, than—than ——

The fire was splendid, and the wax candles burning here and there were full of sleepy suggestions. The Doctor roused himself by an effort, and spread his hands over the glowing coals, and enjoyed the glorious heat, and almost forgot the mutton chop. When he had

bobbed nearly into the flames, and recovered himself many times, it occurred to the little Doctor that another and a final bob might land him in the cinders; so he pulled himself together heroically, and rose from his chair. He yawned gently. How quiet the house was. No doubt everyone was gone to bed. Had he not heard the Bishop say they were gone to their rooms, and for what—after tea—except for repose? He was tired. He, too, would go to bed.

Then the good little gentleman knelt down, and said his evening prayers. He prayed most sincerely for the Bishop in spite of that missing chop, and calmly, with a conscience devoid of offence, began to make preparations for his couch. If he had any doubts about the earliness of the hour, he put it down to an episcopal rule that all should retire at an appointed time and so found it good in his eyes. To his primitive mind (a mind that had never wandered from a strict belief in the customs of the earlier part of the century), a dinner at half past seven was a thing unknown. If he had heard of any such absurdity, he had forgotten it. As I have told you, he was as dead to all innovations that had taken place since "Sailor Billy" was king, as the babe unborn; and yet it was the sixty-fifth year of the nineteenth century.

Finally he kicked off his boots, and crept gladly into bed. It was a bed so comfortable that in two minutes he was sound asleep. He was indeed just entering into a beatific dream where his poorest old widow had received provisions sufficient in quantity to last her for several years, when a sound rang through the room, driving sleep affrighted from his lids. *Where* had he heard that sound before? The gong! the gong! What! morning so soon!

He sprang up in bed, and looked vaguely round him. As he did so, the door opened, and a young woman entered the room.

"Eh?" said the Doctor, staring hard at her. He felt he was at a disadvantage in his night cap, and could not help wishing at the moment that the tassel would not dangle so insanely. He wished, too, that some more intellectual remark had risen to his lips, but the wish was productive of no good. The young woman stared at him in return with undisguised wonder, but from speech she refrained.

"Eh?" said the Doctor again; then, remembering that she had refused to make reply to this monosyllable before, he struggled with himself, and added some words to it. "What is this?" he said, confusedly. "What hour is it? Does his lordship rise before *daylight?*" He bobbed the tassel at her as he said this. A most confounding tassel! of abnormal stoutness and unparalleled length. The maid went down before it. She drew nearer to the door, and laid her grasp as a precautionary measure upon the handle.

"Lawks, sir," she said, "whatever are you lying a-bed for? Dinner will be served in two mingits."

With that she darted into the corridor outside, and fled from the "mad gentleman" to the safe regions below.

"Dinner!" repeated the Doctor to himself, in a dazed tone; and

then, "Bless me!" He had not even time to repent him of this rash oath, as he called to mind the bare two minutes left him; and springing from his bed, he plunged into his clothes again.

With all the haste he made, however, he did not succeed in being less than ten minutes late as he entered the drawing-room. All the other guests were there, but were fortunately arguing busily over a huge portfolio of Italian views. Mrs. Craik was standing on the hearth-rug somewhat apart. With a deep blush and a very distressed countenance, the Curate advanced towards her.

"Ah, Dr. Ball! As I said before, it was a long drive," said the Bishop, graciously, leaving the group near the portfolio, to come up to him. "Confess the truth, now; say you fell asleep before your fire. I often do it myself—often."

"It was hardly that, my lord," said the Doctor, to whom even prevarication was hateful.

"Ah, ah!" said the Bishop, laughing. "Did anyone ever, I wonder, confess to those forty winks? You were tired though, eh?"

"I *was* tired," said the little Doctor, simply. He might have let it so rest, but his conscience pricked him. In leaving the matter thus, was he not leading his host and Bishop astray? His little, round, guileless face assuming even a deeper tinge of red, he turned to the Bishop again.

"The fact is," he said, earnestly, "that when at home, I dine early, and take my tea, when—when *you* take *yours*. Then after a couple of hours' reading, I go to bed. Having no reading with me to-night, and feeling fatigued, I went to bed straight. I did not understand about the dinner, my lord. That is *actually* how it was. I beg, Madam," turning to Mrs. Craik with the old-fashioned courtesy, that all his years of poverty and seclusion had not been able to steal from him, "you will try to forgive me, for having had the misfortune to keep you waiting."

The Bishop had suddenly found some fault, or some remarkable virtue in his shoe-buckle. He bent obstinately over it. Only his wife, however, could see by the shaking of his shoulders that he was convulsed with laughter. She launched at him a withering dart from her usually mild blue eyes, then pulled her satin skirts aside, and beckoned to Dr. Ball to sit down beside her.

"You must not think you have kept us waiting for even one moment," she said, with extreme sweetness. "I don't believe dinner is ready even yet; cook is *so* unpunctual!"

Even as these words passed her lips the footman announced the meal in question, in an aggrieved tone suggestive of many abusive words addressed to him by an irate cook. Nevertheless, I feel sure Mrs. Craik's kindly fib was forgiven her in the highest courts of all.

After dinner the Bishop led Dr. Ball into the library, and with a cheery: "Now, let me know how I can help you," threw himself into a lounging-chair, and prepared to listen to some small parish trouble.

Thus addressed, all the Curate's wits at once deserted him. In a mean, paltry fashion, they fled, leaving him utterly stranded. He had meant to be more than ordinarily eloquent about Dulcinea's love affair; but now brought face to face with the foe, he found himself barren of words. Yet speak he must; and so, boldly, curtly, tersely, he stated his mission, and expressed his hope of obtaining for Dulcinea permission to marry the man of her heart.

To say the Bishop was astounded would be to say little. He was so amazed that he leant back in his chair, and for some minutes was incapable of an answer. Then he began a diatribe about fortune-hunters, and his duty as a guardian, and Dulcinea's wealth, and her general impracticability. When he had got so far he paused, and looked at the Curate, as if for a further lead. But Dr. Ball was sorely in want of a lead himself. He was in fact frightened out of his life. It seemed such presumption to sit there, and argue with his Bishop! What *was* he to say? Silence was impossible with the Bishop sitting there staring at him in expectant impatience; speech seemed equally so! At last his lips unclosed, and some words unbidden rose to them.

"She is such a very *good* girl," he murmured, in a dull, heavy tone, hardly knowing *what* he said. Could anything be tamer, more meaningless? He felt his cause was lost.

"Yes, yes, no doubt," said his lordship testily, somewhat put out, he hardly knew why, by the Curate's simple remark. "I have hardly had a good opportunity of sifting her character *so* far, as she has obstinately refused of late every invitation sent her by Mrs. Craik. But I am glad to hear you speak of her so favourably."

Again he paused, and looked expectantly at the Doctor, who felt the blood mount surging to his brow. Oh! for the tongue of a Demosthenes to sing his dear girl's praises! It was denied him! His very brain seemed dry as his parched lips. Yet speak he must.

"I never met so *good* a girl," he stammered again in the same heavy, impressive tone, his shamed eyes on the ground. Good gracious, was he never to get beyond this lukewarm formula?

"No doubt, no doubt," said the Bishop, with growing discomposure. "The fact that she *is* so admirable a girl as you describe her proves to me that there is all the more reason why I should feel myself bound, as her guardian, to look after her interests, and shield her from all harm; from *fortune-hunters* especially. And this Mr.—ah—Wygram seems to me nothing better than one of that class."

Then he looked once more questioningly at Dr. Ball, as though defying him to take up the cudgels *here*. It was a piercing look this time, and utterly wrecked the small remaining wits the poor little Curate still possessed. He sank deeper into his chair, and thought longingly of the fate of Korah.

"He is such a *good* young man," he said at last, not feebly as one might imagine, but with more than ordinary loudness, born of his distraction. Alas! alas! why did Dulcinea choose a broken reed

like him to be her lover's advocate? Oh! where were the chosen, honeyed words he had rehearsed in secret for this fatal interview? He sat covered with self-reproach, a sight to be pitied.

"Eh?" said the Bishop, with a start, stirring uneasily in his chair. Something in his companion's mild but persistent praise seemed to rebuke him. Here was a man who thought of nothing but the grandeur of moral worth! Who looked upon position, wealth, social standing, as dross in comparison with it. He, the Bishop of the diocese—who should be an example to his flock—sitting here, dealing altogether in worldly topics, such as the worth of money, was brought to bay by a poor curate who was mildly but righteously insisting on the worth of *goodness*.

"You know him intimately of course," said the Bishop, after a short pause, alluding to Gerald Wygram "You can give me an honest sketch of him as he appears to you. I have faith in your judgment; you have seen much of him, no doubt. As guardian to Miss Vane I am desirous of looking well into both sides of the question. Her happiness should be a first consideration. Now," leaning one elbow on the table and looking fixedly at the devoted curate, "give me your exact opinion of this young man."

A deadly silence followed. Now or never the unfortunate Curate felt was the moment in which to break into laudatory phrases about Dulcinea's lover. But none would come. He opened his lips; he tried to focus his thoughts. In vain!

"I think I never met so *good* a young man," he said in a tone so solemn, it might have come from the dead. To the Bishop, the sound was earnest, to Dr. Ball it meant despair!

"Indeed, indeed!" said the former who was fond of reiteration. He said it impatiently, and got up, and began to pace the floor. He was a good-hearted man and something within him seemed to warn him against forbidding the happiness of two people praised by the best man in his diocese. "It is a great responsibility," he said, striding slowly up and down the room. "He—this Mr. Wygram—has a bare subsistence, *no* prospects; and *she* has close upon £5,000 a-year. She ought to marry a title. Her father was bent on it; he as good as said so to me just a month before his death. This, that you speak of, is not a thing to be lightly done. But you give me such a high character of Mr. Wygram—you have bestowed indeed such unqualified praise on both him and Miss Vane—that you make me hesitate about refusing my consent. Who am I, that I should take it upon me to make or mar two lives? You have no doubt in your mind about their suitability to each other, have you? You, who know them, you think highly of *both*?"

Again the Bishop leaned towards him. Again that concentrated gaze fell upon the luckless Curate. Again he felt that he must speak when speech was denied him. The Bishop was waiting. Oh! the agony of *knowing* he was waiting.

"I believe it would be hard to find two such *good* young people," he said at last; and then he covered his face with his hand, and felt that now indeed it was all over, and that he was on the verge of tears.

There was a long silence. Then—"Well, well, well," said the Bishop—"I promise you to think it over. Worth, such as you have ascribed to this young man, should count before anything." It really did seem to the Bishop that Dr. Ball had uttered unlimited words of commendation about Gerald Wygram. "And he is of good birth undoubtedly. That is always something, even nowadays. Yes, I'll think it over. When you return home, Dr. Ball, which," courteously, "I hope will not be for some time yet, tell Dulcinea from me, that I shall come and stay with her at the hall very soon for a day or so, to talk all this over, and that I shall ask Mr. Wygram here to study him a little, before giving my final decision. Tell her too"—with a kindly smile directed at the astonished Curate—"that it was your hearty praise of Mr. Wygram that induced me to look into a matter that I cannot still help considering a little imprudent."

"This will be good news for Dulcinea, my lord," said the Curate, finding his voice at last when it was too late. But *was* it too late?

"I hope it will continue to be good news all her life," said the Bishop, with a sigh. He knew he would be glad to get rid of his guardian duties, and for that very reason was afraid to get rid of them. "But now for another topic," he said, cheerfully, laying his hand on the Curate's shoulder. "You know the Rector of Dreena is dead and ——" In fact he offered our little friend a rectory, with an income that quadrupled his present salary. But the Doctor shrank from him when he mentioned it.

"Nay, my lord," he said, "give it to some better man."

"I couldn't," said the Bishop.

"Give it to some better man," repeated the Curate, earnestly. "I could not leave my present place, indeed. They could not get on without me; they are, for the most part so old, and so cross. I beg you will leave me there, with my old men and women. They all know *me*, and *I* know them; and it is too late for me to begin the world afresh, with new faces and new interests."

The Bishop said nothing further then, but he took his arm, and led him into the drawing-room, where presently he drew his wife aside, and told her all about it. After which, Mrs. Craik made a great deal of the little Doctor, and treated him delicately, as if he was of extreme value: as indeed he was.

At the end of two days he went home, and told Dulcinea all the news, and she, on hearing it, took him round the neck and kissed him tenderly.

"I *knew* it," she said. "I *felt* it. Something told me you were the one person in the world to win my case for me. Dearest, sweetest, *loveliest* Dr. Ball, how shall I thank you?"

"My dear, if you only knew," faltered the Doctor.

"I *do* know. Don't you think I can appreciate you after all these years? You are so clear, so convincing. You can come so directly to the point. You can say so much that is *good*."

"I can indeed," groaned the Curate, desolated by dismal recollections. "The little I *did* say, was *all* 'good'!"

"I'm sure of it," gratefully. "Your fluency, you know, is your great point. How I should have liked to have heard you parrying successfully every one of that horrid old Bishop's attacks upon my Gerald. But, indeed, it seems to me that I *can* hear you—running through all his good qualities (and what a number he has) in that nice, eloquent, self-possessed manner that belongs to you."

"Dulcinea, hear me," said the Curate, in desperation; and then and there he made his confession. But he failed to convince Dulcinea; she steadfastly adhered to her belief that his eloquence alone had won the Bishop's consent.

"And really he can't be such a *very* bad old man after all," she said, "or he would not be capable of appreciating real worth such as yours—would he, Gerald?" For Mr. Wygram had stolen up to them in the twilight, and secured the Doctor's other arm. Miss Vane looked upon his right one in the light of a fee-simple property.

"It is the one redeeming point in his character," said Mr. Wygram, promptly. "And another thing, Dulcie: nobody shall marry us but Dr. Ball. Eh?"

"Nobody, indeed," firmly.

"My dear girl, nonsense!" said the Doctor. "You must have your Rector, if not the Bishop himself. And—of course, by-the-bye, being your guardian, it *will* be the Bishop. I am a mere nobody. It would not do at all; and you, the most influential—that is, at least, the largest proprietor in the country round!"

"You may call yourself a 'nobody' or any other bad name you like," said Dulcinea, earnestly, "but I can tell you this—*no* one but you shall ever make me Mrs. Gerald Wygram."

"Nothing shall alter that decision—not even the *Arch*bishop," said Mr. Wygram, emphatically.

The Doctor protested, but in his soul I think he was pleased, and went to bed that night as happy as——I was going to say a king: but, indeed, I believe he went there ten times happier than that care-laden mortal.

And the morning brought him news. The old man, his Rector, lay dead in an Italian town, and the Bishop had appointed Dr. Ball as his successor. "So, you need not leave those happy old men and women who call you pastor," wrote the Bishop, kindly—almost tenderly.

So it was as rector, *not* as curate he made his dear girl Dulcinea Wygram.

BABY HELÈNE.

She was only the child of the May-day,
That came when the sweet blossoms fell,
But rarer than any fair lady
Of whom the old poets may tell.
Then the days brought us everything sweeter,
Of sunshine and love in their train;
But better than all and completer
Was Baby Helène.

With a kiss and a smile she came to us,
The sunshine of God in her hair,
Ah! never a sweet wind that blew us
A blossom so tender and rare.
We sang a new May-song together,
New-found and of jubilant strain;
Ah! our hearts then were light as a feather,
With Baby Helène.

Would she stay with us—love us? we bid her
Unloosen the notes of her song,
And tell where the sweet angels hid her,
And why had we waited so long.
Would they sorrow in Heaven to miss her?
Would they wait for her, weary to pain?
Would they anger to see us but kiss her—
Our Baby Helène?

And all the day long, like new lovers,
Like words that are ever in tune,
Like songs the fresh May-wind discovers,
Like birds that are mating in June,
Together we loved and we wandered,
Forgetting of sorrow or pain,
Forgetting the sweets that we squandered
With Baby Helène.

Oh! lips running over to kisses,
Red cheeks kissed to brown by the sun,
Shall we ever again know what bliss is,
When the song and the kisses are done?
Oh! baby, brown-haired, on thy tresses
The hands of the angels had lain,
And joy laughed new-born in caresses
Of Baby Helène.

Years went—seven years with their story,
More bright than Aladdin's of old,
To love and be loved was our glory,
Our hearts were our castles of gold.
But broken our castles, and falling,
Hope crushed—true hearts bleeding and slain,
God's angels in Heaven were calling
Our Baby Helène.

Dim-eyed, and heart-broken, we waited
The sounds of invisible things,
While the soul of our soul was re-mated,
Borne off on invisible wings.
In the far away purple and golden,
Went up an ineffable strain,
And the far-away gates were unfolden
To Baby Helène.

One moment, God's earth and its brightness
Seemed darkened and turned into dross,
And the manifold stars and their lightness,
Were dimmed and as nothing to us.
For the bowl that was golden was broken,
The hearts that were one heart, were twain,
And the last words of love had been spoken
By Baby Helène.

Ah! seven years gone as the dream goes,
Oh! baby love, lost to our ken,
Will the brooklet still flow where the stream flows?
Will the lilies still blossom as then?
Will the sweet tongues of birds be unloosed to
The songs of our love and its pain?
Will the violets bloom as they used to
For Baby Helène?

Oh! baby love, heart-sweet, the sunlight
That fell on the way that you went,
Shall be to our feet as the one light,
The lamp the sweet angels have lent.
And the nights and the days shall be lighter,
And the ways that were dark ways be plain,
And the stars where thou art shall be brighter
For Baby Helène.

CHARLES AUSTEN'S LOVE.

A LONG stretch of dull, lurid sky; the sun sinking from view behind a chain of grey hills in the distance; a murky vapour hanging over the broad waste of heath, bounded on one side by the waters of a shallow river, overhung with drooping willows. The south-east wind blew up with a sickly chill from the far-away sea, sending a shiver through the nearly leafless branches of the woodbine still clinging to the casement, and through the frame and the heart of the young girl who stood there, looking out. It was all so dreary; all, all. There was no break in her monotonous life from day to day; she had begun to think there never would be any.

"Is it not late to have that window open, Lucy?" spoke up a querulous voice from the depths of an arm-chair on the hearth-rug.

Miss Dennit closed the window, drew the curtains before it to keep out the draught, and turned to the fire. The red glow lit up her face; but the warm light could not make the face otherwise than plain. At least, most people would have called it so, with its irregular features and its pale complexion. The one redemption it had, lay in its large, longing, soft brown eyes, and its mass of fine, dun-gold hair. And, to some people, there might be an attraction in its sweet and patient expression.

"Is that girl gone to her milking yet, Lucy?" cried the same fretful voice again. "In my days milkmaids did not stand star-gazing when the cows were waiting for them."

"I will see, grandmamma. I think it is hardly time."

The old woman in the chair was not her grandmother, though Lucy always called her so; she had been only the second wife of her mother's father, old Mr. Deste. Lucy put some more fuel on the fire, caught up a plaid shawl that lay on the back of a chair, and left the room. Her little grey-and-white kitten, that she had named Ino, followed her. She stooped to pat its silken head and then lifted the kitten in her arms. "You are all I have now to care for, or to care for me, Ino," she said, half sadly. When human sympathy fails, we do not despise that of our poor dumb favourites.

Matty was going off with her milk-pails. Miss Dennit walked through the garden to the side gate, put down the kitten, and stood there, her arms on the topmost wooden bar, feeling more depressed than customary. Nothing but melancholy, as it seemed to her, lay in her surroundings now.

Four years ago—Lucy shivered as she recalled it—her father, George Dennit, was missed one evening from his home at Dewbury: a handsome property of his own, standing some ten miles away from this. A few days' search—oh, such desolate, anxious

days of suspense and fear!—and he was found in the stream that skirted a portion of his land, and into which he must, it was universally assumed, have fallen accidentally. Mr. Dennit's means died with him. Dewbury went to a relative; it was entailed in the male line, and Lucy, being of the other sex, could not inherit it. Next, it was discovered that Mr. Dennit had embarked every shilling he possessed besides in a grand investment; and the investment fell to the ground soon after his death, and Lucy had nothing to fall back upon. She was homeless and penniless: and she thanked God sincerely that He had taken her dear mother before the shock came. Ah, what a happy home had been hers at Dewbury! full of brightness in the present, of hopeful prospect for the future! For a long while after quitting it, she dared not recal to memory the days that had been.

Old Mrs. Deste, her step-grandmother, offered her a home at Marsh Farm. Lucy accepted it gratefully; she had no other refuge; and though she knew it would be dreary, she schooled her mind to make the best of it. But it proved to be at times more hopelessly dreary than she well knew how to bear. Marsh Farm was small, only a handful of land, as may be said; but the old lady had continued to rent it and to cultivate it ever since her husband's death ten years ago, and she meant to do so to the end. She was active still, and went about the fold-yard and the barns and the homely garden in her pattens as briskly as Matty, looking after all things, her shrill tongue everywhere. Just now she had a touch of ague; it confined her indoors, and increased her ill-temper.

"Will it last for ever, this life?" thought poor Lucy, as she bent over the gate in the dreary October evening, her eyes, filled with tears, fixed on the western sky in front of her, where the setting sun was trying to shine for the first time that dreary day. "Will it last for ever, this life that is growing so intolerable? Without love or sympathy, without aim, without even the power of doing a little good?"

All in a moment, seeming almost to have sprung from the earth, a gentleman stood before her. A man of four-and-forty years, with a slender, upright form, a pleasing face, and threads of silver mixing with his dark hair. It was Charles Austen; called Squire Austen in the neighbourhood. He had a fine place about two miles away, and owned a good deal of the land hereabouts, Marsh Farm included.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lucy. "I did not see you coming up."

"I came round by the privet-hedge. What is your sorrow, Lucy?" added Squire Austen, as he took her hand, detecting the tears on her cheeks.

"Not much," she answered, in a light tone. "It has been a very dreary day, and I think such weather affects the spirits."

"Has your grandmother been even less amiable than usual?" he enquired. "Finding fault all round, and putting crooked so many things that would otherwise be straight?"

"Grandmamma is always cross now," answered Lucy. "But I think she suffers a good deal," she added, in extenuation. "And she is growing old, too. I always think that life to the old must be either one thing or the other: either very unlovely, dreary and sad, or very beautiful with the glow upon it of the unseen life that is approaching. This depends upon how the past life has moulded the character, and directed one's hopes and affections."

She spoke half dreamily, half to herself, and was probably carrying out the train of thought in which she was indulging before Charles Austen had come upon her so suddenly.

"I can imagine what *your* old age will be," he said, looking tenderly upon her. "To you will belong all its softness and beauty, and people will come to you in all their troubles for comfort and consolation."

"You think too well of me," returned Lucy, smiling. "Already I feel as if my youth were slipping away from me, and as yet there has been very little loveliness in my life. Before you came upon me so abruptly, I was wondering whether this sort of existence was to be mine for ever."

"And was this the cause of your tears?" he asked.

"I fear so," replied Lucy, blushing. "But after all perhaps I am ungrateful. If we do not take our lives into our own hands, they are chosen for us—and therefore what I am now going through must be best for me."

"You are an optimist," he laughed.

"I believe in the overruling and constant watchfulness of a Higher Power," she replied simply. "One who does all things well. Yes, I am sure that everything is for the best. Is that being an optimist?"

"It is the right way of looking at life, the wisest and most trusting," answered Charles Austen. "And it brings its reward."

He now drew open the small side gate and came in. Miss Dennit turned towards the house. He walked with her up the winding path.

"Were you coming in to see grandmamma?" she enquired.

"No; not particularly. Let us sit down for a few moments." And without waiting for any assent, he drew her to the bench beneath the great oak tree. There, once more taking her hand in his, he quietly asked her, his voice attuned to softness, to be his wife.

Lucy started away from him, flushing red to the very roots of her hair. Mr. Austen saw the swift rush of colour, dim though the light was there under the tree.

"You are asking me out of pity!" she cried, putting her hands to her face. "Surely you can have no love for so sad and spiritless a girl as my life has made me."

"Indeed, you wrong me," he answered; "as much as you wrong yourself by that description. I came here this evening with the firm intention of asking you to be my wife. Our conversation has made me, if possible, still more anxious for your reply."

"But what can I say?" returned Lucy with a voice full of tremor. "It has come upon me so suddenly. I never dreamed of this. Our positions are so different ——"

"Only as regards worldly substance," he generously interrupted; "and that is as it should be. In all else, Lucy, you are worthy of a noble."

"Oh, no, no," she cried, moving yet farther away. "You do me too much honour. I cannot ——"

"Do not decide hastily, Lucy," he said. "That movement almost tells that you were doing so—and to reject me. Weigh things well first. My dear, I have long seen how dreary your home is here; I would fain transplant you to one that will at least be more cheerful."

"You are very kind, Mr. Austen," she murmured.

"But do not think I am asking you from this sole motive—your own benefit," he returned, with a smile. "No. I want you for myself. I have learnt to love you, Lucy—more deeply than I once thought I could ever love again. You know my history?"

"Yes. Oh, yes. At least—some of it."

"In the past days, when I was nearly twenty years younger than I am now, I loved one who was—who was ——"

Squire Austen broke off in emotion. It was as if the remnants of the old love lay about him yet.

"Why speak of it?" murmured Lucy. "I know more than enough, and how you must have suffered."

"Well, I loved her very greatly, that's enough to say; and I have kept single all these years for her sake. You have heard who it was, I daresay."

"Jean Deste, grandpapa's niece," whispered Lucy.

"And your mother's cousin. Yes. We plighted our troth to one another in love. True love; passionate love, Lucy; there was as much on her side as on mine. I retained at least that grain of consolation."

"And she gave you up," said Lucy in an earnest tone of sympathy. "Close upon the wedding-day."

"She gave me up close upon the wedding-day," assented Mr. Austen, his voice betraying resentment even yet, though he might know it not. "One came along here richer than I was, his prospects grander; I was not the eldest son then: Jean was dazzled by his attractions and she gave me up for him. There it lies, all the history: and many years have passed since then."

"If I once promised to marry a man, I would hold to my promise whatever might betide," spoke Lucy, clearly resolute.

Charles Austen laughed kindly. "And I want you," he said, "to promise to marry me. But not hastily, not against your better will or judgment; understand that fully, my dear. Weigh well the arguments that may present themselves to you, for and against. I am forty-four years of age this year; you are twenty-three ——"

"Twenty-four," she interrupted, in her strict sense of justice. "I was twenty-four last month, September."

"You are twenty-four," he continued, as if without a break. "I am rich, and have a good home to offer you; you are poor and have no home, except this one accorded you by your grandmother, which is at its best dreary. And if you come to my home, I will make it a happy one to you, bright and cheerful ever with its circle of pleasant friends. And I will love and cherish you, my dear, as a good wife ought to be loved and cherished—and I shall trust that in time you will love me."

"I——"

"A moment yet, Lucy. Only that I may again ask you not to give me an answer hastily. Take a few days to consider; a week. This day week, say, at about this same time in the evening, I will come here again, and hear your decision."

He rose, pressed the hand, which he again held, folded the shawl about her shoulders, which she had let slip from them, said good night, and left her.

I wonder if any woman, be she young, or be she old, ever received her first offer of marriage unmoved? No, not if she have a heart in the right place. Lucy Dennit's was stirred to its very depths. Nothing so personally momentous as this had occurred to her in her whole life.

She stood up against the tree; her eyes looked straight into the gathering gloom, seeing nothing. Ino came purring round her, but received no notice now. Lucy was thinking. She was trying to decide already, though Mr. Austen had bade her not.

His own history had had a romance in it. The second son of old Squire Austen, well educated, well principled, and personally attractive, he had fallen in love with Jean Deste. She was beautiful; a graceful, elegant girl, well-trained, accomplished. But the Destes were not equal to the Austens in family or in position, and Charles Austen's fancy was not favoured in his home. The young lady, an orphan, had been destined for a governess; she, like Lucy Dennit in the present, had no home save the temporary one given her by her uncle at Marsh Farm, and no money. She was only eighteen, then, and she became as wildly in love with young Austen as he was with her. He brought his father round to give his consent to the marriage; and it was arranged that they should go into the Lowland Farm; Charles to be his father's tenant now; the farm to become his own at the Squire's death. Close upon this decision, September came in. On the first day of the month, when out shooting, Charles Austen got rather seriously hurt, and was conveyed to the county town, to lie up there and be near the doctors.

There came a dashing man to Marsh Farm for the autumn shooting: one Captain Trevor. He was a distant connection of Mr. Deste's, and he wrote to ask for accommodation (on the footing of a visitor) for himself and his servant, offering a substantial recompense.

He came. It might be said he came, and saw, and conquered. A man of the world, he, of courtly manners. Jean Deste was dazzled. He admired her childish beauty, he paid her great attention; he walked with her, and sat with her, and sang with her, and he won her fancy if not her heart. Some words that he spoke, one day, in his heedlessness, she construed into an offer of marriage. She thought he had made it; he (afterwards) totally denied it, laughed at the very idea of it. That was the notion she took up, however. He was a rich man with a fine estate: as his wife she should be (as she whispered to herself) a grand lady of the world; while as Mrs. Charles Austen she should be but a farm-house mistress. Not for a day did Jean hesitate.

She wrote to Charles Austen a pretty little letter, full of penitence for what she was doing, and gave him up. Irrevocably. There was no beating about the question, no hesitation. She had learnt to care for Captain Trevor, she said, and was about to marry him: and she knew that she should never have got along in a farm; she was not calculated for one; she felt that the sphere into which a union with Captain Trevor would raise her was her proper and fitting sphere; the secret ambition of her heart had ever been to marry a man who could give her position and wealth.

This letter reached Charles Austen the day after his return home. He had been away two months; and, though cured, was weak yet. Wounded as with a barbed arrow, he proceeded to Marsh Farm, and had a stormy interview with Jean. It did no good: she held to her decision. He demanded to see Captain Trevor, calling him sundry contemptuous names; but Captain Trevor had left the farm that morning to stay a few days with some acquaintances he had made, ignorant of the tempestuous weather he left behind him. Jean seeking to be just, in spite of her unworthy conduct, explained to Charles Austen that Captain Trevor did not merit blame: it had never been disclosed to him that she was an engaged girl; for aught he knew to the contrary, she had been free as air. Telling her that she was utterly unworthy an honest man's love, and that he would never willingly look upon her again in life, Charles Austen went out from Marsh Farm and from Jean, shaking the dust off his shoes. The clouds looked bleak and bitter in the November sky: they were not as bitter as the young man's heart.

That was the ending, so far as he was concerned. For Jean it was even less satisfactory. After a week's absence, Captain Trevor returned to the farm; but only to make preparations for his final departure. What was his hurry, Mr. Deste asked him. Nay, but he thought he was not in any hurry, the Captain answered, smiling pleasantly; the two months that he had originally proposed to stay, were already expired. "And what of Jean?" cried the farmer, who was a plain, honest, simple-natured man. "What of Jean?" repeated the Captain, "nothing, that I know of. *What* of her?" "Is she not going to be

your wife? Did you not ask her to be?" Captain Trevor stared. "Why no, certainly not," said he readily; "I never thought of such a thing." The farmer stared in turn. "Well, I don't know," he said in perplexity, "she picked up the notion somehow, and told her aunt of it." "She must have been joking," returned Captain Trevor. "I have jested and laughed with Jean, kissed her also now and then as a cousin—or indeed I may say as a child, for she's not much more; but I assure you there has been nothing else." "Well, well, Trevor, I dare say you are right; young girls are silly creatures," concluded Mr. Deste; "and I hope you'll come again next year."

So that was all. Captain Trevor said nothing to Jean before he went, though she expected it all day long, every minute of every hour. He openly called her "My dear," as one calls a child, and gave her a farewell kiss before them all. When he was gone, Mr. Deste took his niece to task, telling her in the presence of his wife that young maids in their teens should not be forward to pick up silly notions; he repeated, word for word, the conversation with Captain Trevor, and perhaps, unconsciously, a little exaggerated the Captain's cool indifference.

"Thee hast done a pretty thing, girl, in flinging up young Austen," commented Mrs. Deste, in the homely language she kept for scolding. "Thee has flung away the substance, trying to grasp the shadow, Jean. And, I would like to ask, what's left to thee now?"

Nothing was left to her, except humiliation, burning shame, a lasting sense of disgrace. Before a week was over Jean Deste had quitted her uncle's roof for that of the distant school where she was educated. She remained in it as teacher for two years; then she became governess in a family, and went abroad with them. She had been a governess all this dreary time since, and was Jean Deste still. Mr. Austen took no more notice of her than if she had been dead: he had never sought her or enquired after her from that day to this.

And now, look at the caprices of fate and fortune! Barely had these troubles been enacted, when Squire Austen's eldest son died, and Charles became the heir. What did Miss Deste think of her doings then?

Leaning against the oak tree this October evening, Lucy Dennit recalled all this that had passed so many years ago—for it was known to her—and asked herself whether or not she should take this good man, who had had his sorrow and outlived it.

She recalled her own painful past, she dwelt on the dreary present, she strove to look at the future. Grim and gaunt it all seemed to her. She was beyond her first girlhood, and care had made her old before her time. A young village flirt had said to her the other day, "Oh, but you know you are quite an old maid already, Miss Dennit." She saw nothing before her but lonely, unloved existence; no near friend to smooth her path to the grave, to touch her hair with a caressing hand, or to press a kiss on her lips.

It was the living without love and loving companionship that she dreaded. Years back, in her shy, girlish heart, she had dreamed of the time when she should have a lover. That time had now come; she had received her first offer—her first and her last—but Mr. Austen was not the kind of lover she had pictured. Lucy glanced back at the plain, gloomy, old farm-house behind her, and then thought of Austen Hall, with its beautiful site, its sunny chambers, and the grand manorial trees surrounding it.

Lastly she thought of the Hall's generous master. Never anything but a good word was given to him far and wide. A kind man he, just, benevolent, intellectual, and still good-looking. She remembered whose hand it was that had put the choicest flowers on her poor father's coffin at the funeral; and who had gently drawn her away from the new-made grave, whispering comfort and hope. A good man in every sense of the term, living to do his duty to God as well as to man. Almost that night she decided. Almost.

And when Squire Austen came a week later to hear her answer, she gave it him without preamble.

"I will marry you," she said, quietly, "but do not ask me yet for love. I, who know so little of it, must wait to learn."

"Heaven help you in the lesson!" he said, fervently, as he kissed her. So they were betrothed.

The marriage was fixed for the following spring—May. Mr. Austen would have wished it earlier, but she whispered that she wanted to learn to love him. Yet, as the months went on, Lucy's courage almost failed her, with the consciousness that the love did not come. Her heart never thrilled at his approach, her pulses beat not a shade quicker when his hand touched hers.

II.

Early in March visitors came to the Hall from town. Mrs. Law and her son Edmund. She was Charles Austen's sister, a quiet, kindly woman. Edmund was a good-looking young fellow of twenty-seven, by profession a medical man, and had taken his degree of M.D. Close work at one of the hospitals, in which he held a post, following upon a slight attack of fever caught in pursuance of his duties, had necessitated change of air. "Come to me for a month at least," wrote Mr. Austen to him, "and get your mother to accompany you." No sooner were they come than Mr. Austen invited Lucy to stay at the Hall; it was a good opportunity for the visit that he had been wishing she could pay.

The two younger people were constantly in each other's society. The Squire, unsuspicious as the day, never dreamed of any undesirable result. They strolled side by side in the sweet spring sunshine; they fell into confidential talk; they compared sorrows in their past lives—and never a disloyal thought occurred to either of them,

never a fear of it until it was too late. Since October, Lucy had been whispering to herself that she must be too old and grave to love: she now found out her mistake. At Dr. Law's step her face would crimson, the touch of his fingers on hers thrilled her for hours afterwards with a subtile sense of delight. She awoke to its meaning with a sort of helpless horror. She could not help herself; she dared not speak and avoid him, for her lightest word would reveal that she had given her heart unsought.

So the farce went on. The Squire, greatly engaged with certain business at this time, and also in driving out his sister, from whom he had long been separated, was genial and happy. Lucy grew pale and wretched, Dr. Law was never at ease. They mutually avoided one another as much as was possible without giving rise to observation.

One day early in April, when Mr. Austen had gone to his place on the magistrates' bench, and Mrs. Law kept her room with a cold, Lucy, intensely wretched, wandered out, she cared not whither, and found herself near the mines, which lay two miles away on the Austen property. There, to her dismay, she encountered Dr. Law: she had thought him with his uncle. He had just emerged from the shaft. Equally confused at seeing her, he began to talk of the darkness below.

"I never have seen it," she said, looking down the shaft. "I should so like to go."

"Nothing more easy, ma'am," spoke up the foreman of the pit, who knew Miss Dennit. "We let some ladies down only last week. You've just got to step into the basket, and you can be down and back again in a minute or two."

Taking him at his word, Lucy stepped in. Dr. Law followed her quickly. She had not intended this—but what objection could she make? The cord was rapidly unwound; they descended swiftly. Touching the bottom and looking up, Lucy saw only the minute circular hole filled with daylight.

Dr. Law spoke. "Will you get out and explore farther?"

"No, no!" she said, with a shiver. "Let us go back instantly. I feel frightened—half suffocated. I cannot think what impulse induced me to come down to this terrible place."

He saw that she was really nervous, and put up his hand to give the signal for return to those above, but it fell back powerless by his side. A pale blue flash of light illumined the blackness—there was a noise as if the solid universe were rent—a fearful sense of suffocation filled the air, and then afar off was heard the rush and gurgle of water.

"Good heavens!" murmured Edmund Law. "It must be fire-damp!"

Lucy clung to him; he clasped her blindly. In that moment of peril, their last moment it might be in this world, they forgot the very

existence of Mr. Austen; forgot everything but that they loved one another better than life.

Dr. Law was tolerably well acquainted with the mine; he realised the situation at a glance. To hope for aid from above was futile. The whole shaft had been choked up; the only avenue to safety cut off. All he could do was to labour for the few moments left him of life. He lifted Lucy some feet above to a shelf of rock and climbed up beside her. She clung to him like a child; he held her to him as if she had been one.

"I am not afraid with you, Edmund," she presently whispered. "I feel quite happy."

"Lucy, I must speak now. Oh, I have loved you from the very first, but I have tried to be honourable for his sake. He is so noble, and so generous! But now, in this last hour, it can be no sin to speak. My darling, may I kiss your lips?"

"On the other side," she answered simply. "In this world my lips belong to him only. It cannot be long to wait."

He acquiesced in silence. They sat on quietly side by side, his arm round her waist to hold her up safely, her hand in his.

It seemed ages to them, but it was only a few minutes, ere the terrible stillness that had come upon the place was broken by a dull thud. The very darkness quivered and danced before them; a second and a third stroke, and a mass of earth fell down from above, almost stunning, almost blinding them; and then a breath of heaven's own air swept in—a ray of sunshine dropped its gold into the gloom.

The miners had broken in the top of the mine, and they were saved. A rope was let down—Dr. Law fastened it around the waist of Lucy—she was drawn up, and he speedily followed. But when he bent to lift her up, she sank a dead weight in his arms, without life or motion.

A week or two of long and anxious watching elapsed before Lucy Dennit rallied, and they knew that she would live. All through the sweet April sunshine she lay in the great guest-chamber of the Hall, to which she had been carried—lay quietly unconscious. But she spoke at times incoherent words in her mind's wandering, which astonished Squire Austen and Mrs. Law.

"The mine, Edmund! the mine!" she murmured in her first return to consciousness. "Edmund, where's Edmund?"

"You are safe with me, my dear," said the Squire; "and Edmund is safe too. He was hurt a little, and has stayed on here to get well and strong again. You shall see him soon."

Lucy took the kind hand that was smoothing her brow, kissed it, and burst into tears. "You are so good to me!" she whispered.

"I try to be," he answered.

A day or two later, when she was better, and lying on the sofa by

the window, the magnificent prospect outside gladdening her eyes, Dr. Law came in. He had not attended her professionally; for the first few days he had to be attended to himself; later, he declined to interfere. He knew that the less he saw of Lucy Dennit the better for his peace.

"Oh, Edmund, do not come here!" she cried out in alarm.

"My dear ——"

"Edmund, do not! You must not. You are an honourable man, Edmund. Oh, Edmund, you know, you know! Why do you come here?"

"But, Lucy, hear me," he began passionately. But she would not.

"Hush! do not tempt me. Heaven knows I want to do my duty. But I am weak, and you must help me with your strength: men can always be stronger than women. Edmund, you must go away from the Hall; you should not have stayed. Go at once. I cannot keep up this wretched deceit before him, so generously unsuspecting. Go back to your home, Edmund; we must not meet again. With Heaven's help I will be true to him to whom my plighted word is given."

In answer to this urgent and agitated appeal, Dr. Edmund Law simply bent his head and kissed her.

"Oh, Edmund! for shame!" she cried, with flushing face. "Have you quite lost honour?"

Edmund laughed at the appeal and imprisoned her hand in his. "As to going away," he said blithely, "you must hear me first. I have something to say."

"You would not say it before your uncle," she returned quite indignantly, striving to be loyal and true.

"Why, my dear uncle sent me in to say it," answered Edmund.

He told it then, and she listened. Great news. *Glorious*, she might have thought it but for being ungrateful. Charles Austen, having become acquainted with the state of affairs, had resigned her to Dr. Law.

He came in himself to confirm it. His face pale, but his fine eyes sparkling with the light of a generous purpose. Lucy caught his hand within her own as she listened, tears trickling down her face.

"Many things that I did not understand are now clear to me," he said in conclusion. "I was too long blind: and, my dears, your young lives shall not be wrecked by the selfishness of an old fellow like me. I have lived without love hitherto; it will not be much harder so to live on to the end. Nay, don't thank me. There; I'll leave you to talk it over with one another."

He went out of the room and left them together. Went out into the bright sunshine, and thought it had never seemed so golden as then. He was a little sad, but on his heart there fell a great wave of peace.

He went down the flower-bordered path to the honeysuckle arbour that stood near the garden entrance. The tall, graceful form of a lady in half-mourning was coming in at the gate, and it caused him to turn to her. She threw back her veil, revealing a face pale and sad, yet singularly sweet; a young face still, for all its eight-and-thirty years. A shiver like an aspen leaf passed over Charles Austen, thrilling him with—was it joy?—or was it resentment?

"I beg your pardon," she began, in the old sweet voice he remembered so well. "Do—do you know me?"

"I think I do. Miss Deste, I believe."

"Will you pardon me this intrusion? I have felt very anxious about Lucy Dennit: and my aunt thought if I ventured to call here, I might be allowed to see her. Her mother was my cousin, and a dear friend of mine in my girlhood."

"You can see her, of course. Are you staying at Marsh Farm?"

"I came there yesterday to see my aunt. It is many years since I saw her; I have lived abroad."

They walked towards the house, talking of indifferent things in a politely distant tone. "I will send up to ask if Lucy can receive you at once," said Mr. Austen. "We must not intrude upon her too abruptly, for her intended husband is holding his first interview with her since her illness," he added, with a half smile.

"Her intended husband!" repeated Miss Deste. "I thought—I heard—I fancied—that ——"

"That it was I who was to marry her," quietly put in the Squire. "No, Jean, it is my nephew, Dr. Law."

The name, Jean, slipped out without thought. Her face turned crimson, and then paled to a marble whiteness.

Miss Deste stayed all day. She and Mrs. Law had not met for twenty years. Charles Austen walked home with her in the summer's evening. All his love for her had come back again; the enduring, ardent love that had never died out.

"Do you intend to make much stay at Marsh Farm?" he asked, breaking a long silence.

"About a week, I think."

"And then?"

"Then? Oh, then I go into the world again," she said, smiling. "The engagement I have had so long has terminated, and I must seek another."

"You are not rich enough, then, to retire?"

Jean looked round at him with another smile. Ah, what a sweet face it still was!—how it sent all his pulses tingling! "Did you ever hear of a governess getting rich, Mr. Austen? I don't think I ever did."

Turning in at the side gate of Marsh Farm, it was the nearest gate, they went up the path. The sun was setting, and the sky around was very beautiful, and they sat down side by side under

the shade of the spreading oak tree to watch it. Its dying beams lighted up their faces with a rosy hue.

"Am I to forgive and forget?" he suddenly whispered.

"I should like your forgiveness, Charles; though you may not forget," she said, after a pause of emotion, as she turned to him her agitated face. "Just your forgiveness! I have pined for it, ay, and prayed for it, all these wearing years."

"My Jeanie as of old?" he asked, gathering her to his constant heart. "Nay, better than of old. Shall it be?"

"If you will take her, Charles," she answered softly, bursting into happy tears.

So there were two weddings that summertide instead of one, both the brides being taken from Marsh Farm, from the tender custody of the ancient and genial Mrs. Deste. The one to enter on the busy life that belongs to the wife of a popular medical man; the other to reign as Lady Paramount over Austen Hall and its master's unchanging heart. C. A.

IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE.

QUEEN ANNE she owns a mansion red,
And wears a flowered sacque.
(My Lady Betty will not wed,
And all the beaux look black.)

Queen Anne likes furniture askew,
And spindle-legg'd beside.
(Sir Harry vows he'll never woo;
The belles are mortified.)

Queen Anne tip-taps in high-heel'd shoes,
With patches on her cheek.
("And so Sir Harry never woos?"
"'Pon honour, 'tis my freak!")

Queen Anne reposes in a bed,
Funereal, stately, grim.
"My Lady Betty will not wed?"
"'Pon honour, 'tis my whim!")

Queen Anne applauds a quaint-cut yew,
Her rooms are wainscoted.
("*If*, Lady Betty, I *should* woo —?" —
"Sir Harry, *I—might* wed!")

M. ELLEN STAPLES. R. AND E. TAYLOR.

SHE SEEMED TO HAVE FORGOTTEN HIM.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1884.

THE WHITE WITCH.

CHAPTER VII.

A REVELATION.

GODFREY MAYNE stood in his room, dressing for dinner, greatly bewildered. The conversation he had overheard, half-whispered though it was, between his step-mother and her daughter, had most unpleasantly astonished him, showing him that they held some dangerous secret. He had caught the word "danger," and therefore believed it to be dangerous. Whatever might be its nature, he determined to find it out. That it concerned the girl, not the mother, he felt certain: and it was his duty to ascertain it. Mary Dixon had been received into their home and into the homes of their friends as irreproachable. That she had committed any grave offence against the rules of society, he did not believe; but she seemed to have offended in some way, and he should like to know how, for his own satisfaction: not to enlighten others.

The remembrance of the contemptuous tone in which she had spoken of himself, did not, to do him justice, weigh with him. The matter was too serious for that. Godfrey, with all his bad manners and his ill-temper, was a gentleman, and it would never have occurred to him to do a girl harm because she had insulted him and laughed at him. Those were small grudges, and might be paid back in small ways, but not in attacks, well or ill-founded, upon herself.

When Godfrey reached the drawing-room, only his father and Miss Dixon were there, speaking together in a low tone by the window. They glanced round as he entered and fell apart—Godfrey fancied they had been talking of himself. Mrs. Mayne came in next. She looked pale and her eyes were red.

Dinner passed much as usual. Afterwards, when Mr. Mayne was left alone with his son, he began to reproach him with being "grumpy:" for Godfrey, lost in his own unpleasant thoughts, had been silent throughout the meal.

"A pretty caricature Mary must make of you behind your back, Godfrey, with her talent for taking people off: for it is a positive talent."

Godfrey had small doubt that this was one of the pretty pastimes she had indulged in with Ernest Underwood that afternoon. He replied that Miss Dixon was quite at liberty to take him off as she pleased behind his back, provided she left him alone when he was present.

"You don't get on well together. It seems to me a most unaccountable prejudice that you have taken against her," said his father. "If you were consistent, you ought to admire her very much. You admire fragile girls and girls with soft brown eyes. And you always profess to think a great deal of the way a woman dresses. Then, Mary is quiet and lady-like, but can be very lively when she chooses, and say smart things, as she did this evening."

"I don't care for a girl so very smart that she sees in me nothing but what is ridiculous," said Godfrey. "I think, of the two, I should prefer one too dull to see that there was anything ridiculous at all about me."

"Ah, yes! Elspeth, of course," said Mr. Mayne.

"Oh, ah—yes; of course Elspeth," echoed his son, who had, however, been thinking too much of his hatred of Miss Dixon to remember his fair fiancée's existence.

"Elspeth is a very dear little girl," said Mr. Mayne indulgently; "but you must admit she has nothing to say for herself."

"Then I think there is all the more to be said for her," returned Godfrey, in whose eyes, for the time, brilliancy had no charm.

When they left the dining-room, Godfrey went to the old refectory to smoke, and to think over what he had heard that afternoon; he felt, too, that Miss Dixon in her new character of brilliant and satirical woman would be more than he could stand just then. He had thrown open all the four windows and was leaning out of one of them, when he heard the voice of the butler behind him.

"I beg pardon, Master Godfrey."

The young man turned round impatiently. Hawkins was one of those terrible old servants who are kept only because they have already been kept too long. He took liberties with everybody, and was, Godfrey thought just now, an insufferable old nuisance.

"Well, what is it?"

"I beg pardon, sir," returned Hawkins, perceiving he was not welcome. "If I had thought it was taking a liberty, I would not have ——"

But he would; he was always taking liberties. Godfrey cut him short; he was not in the mood to tolerate even the faithful old retainer.

"Go on, Hawkins; what is it?"

"Well then, sir, this is supposed to be your own particular smoking-room now; is it not?"

"As there is nobody else in the house who smokes, I suppose it is."

"Exactly, sir. Well, Master Godfrey, this new young lady, Mrs. Mayne's daughter, comes ——"

"What, does she smoke here?" asked Godfrey lightly, pleased at an opportunity of teasing the old man, and turning lazily round with his back against the side of the window to watch its effect.

"No, sir," said Hawkins, annoyed. "At least, I don't know what these foreign ladies may do in their own rooms; but that is not my affair. I should not trouble you except about what I know." Hawkins made a mighty pause. Then, turning solemnly and pointing to the other end of the room, he added:

"Look there, sir!"

And Godfrey saw, on the top of a small table and on a couple of boxes that stood against the wall, some sheets of newspaper spread out, on which lay moss, and lichen-covered sticks and grasses, evidently placed there to dry.

"Well?" said he.

"Well, Master Godfrey, that's the sort of rubbish the young lady brings in to litter up the place with. Of course it's not my place to speak to her. But you might speak yourself, sir; and you must, I reckon, if your room is to be kept from being turned into a dust-heap and a home for idiots ——"

"Hawkins!"

"Well, Master Godfrey, and he *is* an idiot; not much removed from it, anyway. It's Dick Wilding, I speak of, sir. The young lady has gone and made friends with him; they are as thick as can be; and he gives her weeds and grasses and such like rubbish over the wall, and he came to the very door here this morning with his hands chock-full of 'em, which she immediately began to spread about the place. If that born-natural is to be allowed to come roving into the room here when he likes, I won't answer for—for anything."

"Miss Dixon's sticks and straws don't interfere with me at all, Hawkins, or with you either," said Godfrey, carelessly. "What on earth does it matter if there are two idiots about the place instead of one?"

Unluckily, one of the persons referred to stood at his elbow. Miss Dixon's voice startled them both; and the unhappy Hawkins, with an exclamation of horror and a muttered apology, backed away from the room. Godfrey put out his cigar. She was carrying a cup of coffee, which she held out to Godfrey deprecatingly.

"I have brought you your coffee. I did knock, but I don't think you heard."

"I am very much obliged to you," said he, with stiff awkwardness. "Mrs. Mayne should not have troubled you."

"Mrs. Mayne didn't want to," replied she, looking up with a smile. "It was rather unlucky for me that I insisted, was it not?" She spoke timidly, but with archness, not as if offended, but as if begging him not to be offended with her.

"Oh, indeed, I—you are quite mistaken if you think ——"

"That you are rather hard upon me? I don't know about that. I —I could not help overhearing something you said just now; though perhaps I ought not to refer to it, as it was not intended for me to hear. Yet if I may, if you will let me, may I ask you this: Was it entirely my fault that I had to make friends with idiots, when the people who are sane would not make friends with me?"

"But, really, Miss Dixon, I assure you, you entirely misunderstood ——"

"Did I?" she broke in, very quietly and sadly. "Very well. Then I beg your pardon." She was turning to go, when he stepped quickly forward. If he had not heard that sweet low voice in a very different sort of speech that afternoon, he would have been altogether melted by it; as it was, in spite of himself, he was touched.

"One minute, Miss Dixon, please. I hope you do not think—I wish you would believe that it is not my fault we are not better friends. A man cannot force himself upon a lady who gives him—who appears to give him every reason to believe that the less she sees of him the better she is pleased, and who only varies that treatment by a direct snub now and then, like the one you gave me to-day about driving you home."

"Have we only been playing at cross-purposes, then? I thought you avoided me because you didn't like me, and I naturally resented it in the weak little way we poor women can use: while you thought I disliked you, and shut yourself up in a cold avoidance, which hurt me, a rather lonely stranger, very much."

"Believe me, I never meant to do that."

"And will you on your side believe that—that I should never have tried to snub you, as you call it, if I had not perhaps felt a little pique at what I have mistaken for a marked avoidance of me? I own I did feel annoyed sometimes. Only this afternoon I was calling you names to my mother, because I thought you did not want me to go to the match to-day."

Godfrey started. This was frank of her; and he had very good reasons for knowing that it was true. He had never felt so awkward in a woman's presence before; he did not know what to say.

"I was only afraid for you. Mrs. Mayne said you could not stand fatigue, and I knew your lovely dress would get crushed and spoilt in the waggonette; and—and I am very much obliged to you for bringing my coffee," concluded he, with elaborate civility.

"That was a pretext," said she, rather hesitatingly, but smiling, and evidently resolved not to be offended. "I will tell you how it was. I want to draw a design for crewel-work: wild-roses and

bulrushes. I was going down to the lane by the church to get the roses, so that I might begin it early to-morrow morning, when mamma forbade my going out by myself so late. Mr. Mayne said: 'Ask Godfrey to go with you.' I knew I should not dare; but he insisted on my coming, so I thought I would bring the coffee, and then, if I were too much frightened to ask, I could run away."

"Indeed I am sorry that I seem so formidable," returned Godfrey, with a short laugh. "I shall be happy to go with you. Shall I call Lydia to get your hat?"

"Oh, no, thank you. We shall not meet anybody, and we must make haste. This shawl will do. And please light your cigar again."

She took up an old grey shawl that was hanging on a peg from which once school-slates had hung; and, throwing it round her head and shoulders before he could offer to help her, she opened the inner door, crossed the hall and went out, followed by Godfrey. He was a good deal softened towards her, against his will, by her pretty manners. She walked quickly on with only a trivial remark or two about the heat and the gnats. It was a lovely evening, the sun hardly set. They turned into the broad avenue which led to the church, and went quickly on, over the long grass under the elm-trees, through clouds of gnats and among myriads of chirping grasshoppers, till they came to the wall of the churchyard, on one side of which a lane ran down a steep hill to a little farm at the bottom. The steep banks of this lane were as a fairyland of wild treasures. Snowdrops, violets, primroses, wild roses and honeysuckle, blackberries, all in their season, grew there; and now in the prime of the flower-time it was sweet with a dozen faint scents. She was about to sit down in the bracken, but Godfrey interposed.

"You will spoil your dress and get your feet wet. If you will sit here on this tree-trunk, I will gather just what you want. And mind you spread your shawl over it first."

She thanked him and sat down, while he leisurely gathered a great bunch of roses, glancing across the road at her from time to time. Grand effect sunset through the trees has on soft brown eyes, he thought. And then he wondered what this sudden change of manner towards himself meant. Was she a hypocrite? Was she an adventuress? Yet what could that mysterious talk with her mother mean, if there was any doubt about the fact of her having something damaging to conceal? He looked at her again. What was the trick, he wondered, of throwing an ugly old grey woollen shawl round one's head so that it seemed quite the most becoming thing in the world? Was it coquetry that made her look up through the trees at the red light in the sky above the setting sun, with lips slightly parted, so that the rosy gleam made her eyes glisten and her cheeks lovely? Was that sad, thoughtful look, that touched him while it irritated him, real, or put on for him? She seemed to have forgotten him; for

when he, after gathering right and left, without paying much attention to what he was doing, came towards her with a huge bunch of all sorts of things, she started in surprise.

"Oh, I did not want all those! Only one or two little pieces."

"Well, now you can choose what you want, and we can throw the rest away."

"Oh, no," she said, as if he had proposed something wicked.

"Well, you can choose the prettiest for drawing, and we'll put the rest in water at home."

He sat down on the tree-trunk and spread out his collection between them because—because he wanted to finish his cigar before going in. So he smoked on, with his eyes on the flowers and the white fingers busy among them, for some minutes in silence. Then his gaze rose from the fingers to the face.

"You look tired," said he.

"I am tired," she answered. And then a momentary gleam of light seemed to pass over her face, as if a new thought had struck her. But she said nothing more.

"So hot and dusty, those polo matches are!"

"Do you think so? I liked it. Only—I believe mamma was right; I ought not to have gone," said she in a low voice.

"Why not?"

"It was tiring. I am tired now."

The red light had faded. She was looking white now, and her eyes seemed very large and dark. Godfrey thought the fragile appearance this gave her made her face strangely interesting.

"But you will be all right to-morrow, after a good night's rest."

"To-morrow, perhaps. But it will not always be so," said she, hastily. "Mamma is always saying, Be careful. But one can't always be; one must forget and enjoy oneself sometimes."

A touch of the restless earnestness of her talk with her mother was in her voice, and in her impatient movements.

"Forget what?" asked Godfrey in a low voice, but with fiery interest.

"Forget that I——oh, but what does it matter? I ought not to talk about it even."

"Tell me what you mean. Forget what?"

"Forget that I am—dying."

He did not see the expression of guilty self-reproach that passed over her face as she saw the effect of these words on him. For the shock made him shudder and look down; and when he raised his eyes, there was a light in them as he turned to her which told that in that first moment of surprise and pity, he would have given his own life to save that of the fragile girl by his side. It was a generous impulse, nothing more, gone almost as soon as it had come. But his voice, when he at length spoke, was low and gentle as a woman's.

"You cannot mean that? I hope not; I hope not!"

"Yes, I do," said she quickly, without looking at him. "My mother and I were talking about it only this afternoon when I got home." Godfrey started; but she did not seem to notice him. "I ought never to go out, never to excite myself in any way, if I am to be safe. But what is the good of life without enjoyment of any kind?" she went on more quickly, more restlessly. "Better be happy a little while, and let my heart stop suddenly at a dance or a race-meeting, than go on sleeping through the days drearily."

"It is your heart?" whispered Godfrey.

"Yes, it is that, I believe. But do not say anything about it, please. I would not have Mr. Mayne know."

"I will not speak of it," he answered. "Was this the cause of your looking so very white when you first came here?"

"No. Well—perhaps yes, partly. I had a fever between two and three years ago, and I lost my colour in it. It had come back, however, when last spring I was again ill, and again lost it. My natural complexion is bright and fresh."

"I am very, very sorry to hear this," said Godfrey, after a pause. "Should you not consult a doctor?"

"Oh, I have done that. They cannot do me any real good," she added, with growing excitement. "Let us go in."

With a tenderness of which she had not thought the sometimes brusque young man capable, he drew her shawl more closely round her and managed to fasten it to her shoulder with the little gold stud out of one of his cuffs. He drew her arm through his to help her slowly up the hill, would not let her walk upon the damp grass, and told her not to talk in the night air. This last command she obeyed willingly; the power of speech seemed to have left her; she walked with drooping head and downcast eyes, keeping silence.

When they neared the house, Godfrey suggested going round by the garden and through the refectory, if she was not too tired. She answered quickly and shyly that she was not. So they went through the garden, and when they passed the window close to which Godfrey had played eavesdropper that afternoon, he saw the silent witness to his wrong-doing in a broken geranium, a trodden-down verbena, and two big foot-prints in the well-watered mould. He felt very much ashamed of himself as he looked, and he wondered that Miss Dixon, whom he saw glancing that way, did not make some remark about such unwonted havoc in the well-kept garden. But she seemed to wish to hasten in. Indeed, she scarcely waited at the door to shake hands with him before, with head down in a strangely shamefaced way, she ran into the house, not allowing him to utter the words of warm kindness which were on his lips.

Godfrey leant out of one of the refectory windows, his thoughts in a tumult. Pity for her, remorse for his own past rudeness, enthusiasm about her face, shame at his hard thoughts of her, were uppermost at first. Then came wonder at her sudden change of

attitude towards him, at her making the confession to him of what she had so carefully kept secret, at the curious (almost guilty) confusion she had shown after relating it. And after wonder came, like a flash of fire—suspicion!

The conviction grew upon Godfrey that he had been tricked; shamefully tricked: that this girl, having somehow learnt that he had had his suspicions awakened, or having perhaps caught sight of him standing there where he had thought himself so well concealed, had had the audacity to work upon his feelings by declaring her own life to be in danger, in order to put him off the scent of the real secret.

A thought flashed across him as he stared out into the gathering blackness of night in the plantation. He closed the window, crossed the room and the hall, and knocked softly at the door of the library.

"Come in," said Mr. Mayne.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN SEARCH OF EVIDENCE.

Mr. Mayne sat at the library table with a newspaper. The walls were lined with dull-looking volumes, which everybody was wise enough not to take down to read. He looked pleased to see his son come in: Godfrey had not of late given him much of his company. The young man sat down, and began talking of indifferent things. He wanted to lead up to a certain question, but not to put it abruptly. Mr. Mayne, however, saved him the trouble.

"How do you and Elspeth get on?" asked he.

"Oh—very well," replied Godfrey, carelessly.

"I saw her this afternoon: I called to speak to Thornhill about hat man who is giving trouble, and stayed with him till dinner time; I heard the dressing-bell as I was coming across the meadow. By the way, Godfrey, what were you—oh, well, never mind."

"I wonder I didn't see you," said Godfrey, without appearing to notice his father's interrupted question. "I was in the garden myself just before dinner."

"Yes, I saw *you*," said Mr. Mayne; and then stopped again.

"I was nailing up a rose-tree near the drawing-room window," went on Godfrey composedly.

"Nailing up a rose-tree!" exclaimed Mr. Mayne. Then, as if further self-restraint was impossible: "Well you have the queerest way of going to work I ever saw! You were trampling the flowers under your feet, and you stood with your head bent against the wall, exactly as if you were listening to something that was going on inside. I did not observe that you had a hammer in your hands. It is true I was not quite close, but still my eyesight is not failing yet, and I never saw anyone look so absurd."

"No doubt I did," quietly acquiesced Godfrey.

"I was telling Mary about it in the drawing-room before dinner. She made me promise not to say anything to you. She thought, like the good-natured girl she is, that it would make you uncomfortable to be told you looked like an eavesdropper: and that was what you looked like, I assure you."

"Oh, I was—I was looking for the old nails," said Godfrey, staring aimlessly in front of him, and not conscious that his answer was ridiculous.

"Well, Godfrey, you will never make a gardener; and really and truly I begin to think you will never make anything. Anything that's good."

"Thank you, father," laughed Godfrey, as he left the library.

The idea he had caught up was true, then. She had discovered that he was outside during that conversation, and had set herself to befool him!

He went out of doors. He strode quickly across to the plantation, leaned his back against a tree and gazed up at the school-room windows, where there was a light.

She was still up, then, with all her fatigue; not yet in her bedroom. What was she doing? Writing a diary, as adventuresses are supposed to do, and setting down how brilliantly she had outwitted him? Or was she only laughing at her triumph over the "ill-mannered bear," and the ease with which she had taken him in?

His indignation against her was great; he felt that he would like to climb the wall between the Abbey garden and the farmyard, mount to the top of the greenhouse, get on to the sill of the nearest of the two school-room windows, both of which were open, and raising the blind, peer in suddenly upon her and confound her in the midst of her enjoyment. She was so delicate, was she? A shock, a little extra excitement, might kill her, might it? By Jove, he should half like to try!

The thought that he had been beguiled by her that evening into a spasm of the tenderest pity, stronger than any feeling he remembered to have known, just by a softly-whispered lie and a sweet glance out of her bewitching eyes, was maddening to his self-esteem; and the fact of her having done so much and so quickly with him, who rather flattered himself that he was a shrewd judge of women, no doubt helped to make him take a very highly-coloured view of her wicked fascination. That it was wicked he did not question, since it was put on with one view—that of misleading him.

But her mother! What share had that gentle, kind-hearted lady had in her daughter's faults or sins? A passive one, or none at all, he felt sure. She was unselfish, capable of devotion; and the duty of a parent to children was one of her guiding principles. The girl had drifted into some undesirable if not dangerous current, and the mother must shield her at any risk. It suddenly flashed upon Godfrey that this was the explanation of his stepmother's morbid anxiety

to protect the guilty from punishment, which had manifested itself in curious ways, and drawn down upon her so much banter and even serious remonstrance; it must be the reason, too, for her fruitless endeavours to keep the girl away from Croxham, for her wish that the girl's wayward nature should be brought under the stern control of a "sisterhood." She must have impressed her daughter with the necessity for keeping a strong check upon herself in this quiet, orderly household; and here was the explanation of the puzzling timidity of the girl's manner for the first few weeks of her stay.

Some secret connected with her past, Mary Dixon undoubtedly had: she saw that he was beginning to suspect it, and was now doing her best to lead him off the scent. But she should have been a little more cautious, have changed front a little more gradually. She should have understood, by this time, that a pair of brown eyes however handsome, and a low voice however sweet, do not cloud a man's reason, in a single tête-à-tête, to the point of making him forget four weeks of indifference or dislike. She had been a little too clever, and she had charmed him a little too much. Dying of heart-disease, indeed!

The moonlight was by this time shining on the panes of the Abbey windows, and he could no longer see whether there was a light in the school-room. He started as he suddenly saw a white hand draw aside the blind, and Miss Dixon's face, on which the candle shone, appear at one of the windows. If this was not another piece of acting, she had been crying, and unbecomingly. Her eyes were red and swollen. She did not look beautiful at all; but so very, very miserable, so utterly dejected and languishing that Godfrey, in the face of his suspicions, after all his fierce indignation at her treachery, felt his heart suddenly melt as he looked at her.

Pshaw! She knew he was there. Perhaps if he had been nearer to the window he might have seen what means she used to produce that effect! But as he thought this, the tears began again to fall fast down her cheeks, and Godfrey turned away, fidgeting with his moustache and half-inclined, on this poor evidence, to retract his condemning sentence on her. His attention was next attracted by a low "St—t—t"; and, turning, he saw a man's head over the wall. It was Dick Wilding, who was looking up at the window, and who stopped her as she was retreating by a hoarse whisper:

"It's me, it's Dick; don't be frightened, Miss Dixon. And don't cry; the devil's down there, among the trees, and it'll make him happy if you cry. Don't cry, don't cry, don't cry."

"Very well, Dick, I will not. I have a headache and it made me cry a little. But you should not be watching in this way; you should not get up there at this hour. Go down. It is time for everybody to be in bed. Good-night, Dick."

She drew the blind before the window. Dick was heard scrambling down: and Godfrey went indoors. The last vent his

perplexed feelings found, was to throw the stud, he had used to fasten Circe's shawl, out of the window in a fresh access of rage. But he had not seen the last of it.

Next morning, chancing to go into an unused room on that side of the house, Godfrey heard a voice below. Looking out, he saw Dick standing at the refectory window.

"Under the red rose-tree in that flower-bed," Dick was saying. "I saw him throw it out of the window here last night, and I climbed over the wall this morning to look, and I found this."

Godfrey could not see what this was, but easily guessed it was his stud. Miss Dixon, from inside the refectory, spoke next.

"Very well, Dick, I'll give it back to Mr. Godfrey. And, Dick, you must not talk of him in that disrespectful way. He never does you any harm ——"

"Yes, he does," interrupted Dick. "Smiler goes lame if we meet him. He does, he does do us harm, Smiler and me, and you too, with his stoop like this" (bending his shoulders) "and his silent face. He killed his brother Charlie."

Miss Dixon gave a faint cry of surprise.

"He thinks it, you know: thinks he killed Charlie, and it makes him mope. He says I'm mad when I say it, but I'm not."

"No, Dick, Mr. Godfrey did not kill his brother. Charlie was drowned at sea a long time ago. You shouldn't say things like that; it is not right."

But Dick only laughed as if he thought her very silly.

"You must go away now, Dick; for I must go to breakfast. Now do try not to think unkindly of anyone."

So Dick slouched off, got over the wall, and disappeared.

Godfrey's anger against Dick was increased by this conversation. No man likes to hear his appearance ridiculed to a beautiful girl, even though she may be an adventuress and the mocker an idiot. He disliked the thought of having his movements watched, as was evidently the case; he did not care that Miss Dixon should know of his having flung away the stud. Of course she would understand *why* he had done it. Dick's mad fancy that he had had a hand in his brother's death was an old and no longer very serious grievance; but with this espionage he would not put up, and he determined to speak that very day about having Dick sent away from the farm.

But something, which appeared to him more important than the lad's presence or absence put this for the time out of his head.

Godfrey was not a very good actor; and though he managed to greet Miss Dixon at breakfast with far more cordiality than he felt, he sauntered off to the stables afterwards. On his return through the plantation he saw Ernest Underwood and the siren, Miss Mary, walking about the garden together. The young man was in high spirits as usual, and both seemed to be enjoying themselves very much; though not indeed with low words and tender glances.

Ernest was telling a pointless story of adventure at the top of his voice with much glee, and she was laughing and teasing him with interruptions.

This sight seemed to move Godfrey, curious to say, to even hotter indignation against her than anything he had learnt before. To choose for a victim, so he put it, a lad of twenty ; who in knowledge of the world and experience and cunning must be at least a dozen years her junior, was very bad, thought the angry and indignant Godfrey. As they strolled round the house to the front, Ernest took his departure. Godfrey, thinking Miss Dixon had gone in, came from beyond the shelter of the trees, and in a minute met her face to face. His own face, eloquent for once, was alight with suspicion and anger. She read it correctly. She was reckless with the exhilaration of bright talk and laughter, and, with a flash of light in her dark eyes, she said, half turning in the direction of Ernest's retreating figure :

"Hadn't you better go after him and warn him against me? Tell him all you *know*," with emphasis on the last word.

"I have not the least idea what you mean," Godfrey answered, coolly. "I do not know anything against you ; and if I did, you would probably be clever enough to prevent anybody else from believing it."

And he passed the girl, who had grown suddenly grave, with the gauntlet flung down at last. There was no further question that he suspected her and that she knew it. Whether her frank audacity was the result of recklessness, or of security, he could not tell.

"I vow and declare that I will use my utmost endeavours to find out what there is against her, and I will set myself to the task from this day !" cried Godfrey to himself in his passion. The girl had angered him beyond endurance.

It was understood from Mrs. Mayne that she had passed the years of her first marriage in Norfolk ; and though Godfrey did not remember to have heard her mention the name of the town, and he knew it would be useless to ask for it now, he had gathered that it was within easy driving distance of Norwich. If Dr. Dixon really had lived for many years there, and died and been buried there, Godfrey felt that his task ought to be an easy one so far. A man cannot live and practise his profession near a county town he frequently visits without being known to a good many people. Godfrey was sure to get in Norwich some clue to the late doctor's place of residence ; and, once he had made his way to the spot, he could learn details of Dr. Dixon's mode of life, of his family, of the consideration in which they and he were held. It might be, indeed, that he would hear nothing but the most reassuring replies, and in that case his task would be complicated. He should then feel sure that the indiscretion, or fault, or sin, which mother and daughter were so anxious to hide, had been committed during the three years of travelling abroad, that had elapsed between Dr. Dixon's death and his widow's second marriage.

Without any delay, Godfrey let it be known that he was about to pay a visit to his aunt at Liverpool, making the announcement at luncheon ; and that he should probably be away two or three weeks and accompany her to Southport. Chancing to lift his eyes while saying this, he met those of Mary Dixon fastened on him, a very curious expression in their depths. Did she suspect him? He did not care.

Drawing the ink towards him, later, on the small writing-stand, Godfrey wrote a few lines to his aunt. After directing the letter, he rose. Mrs. Mayne, passing across the room, glanced at the address.

"The Hon. Mrs. Penteith, Castle Lodge, near Liverpool."

"Why do you put 'The Honourable Mrs. Penteith?'" she asked of Godfrey.

"Well, it is usual to do so, I fancy," he idly drawled, in reply.

"Yes, yes ; I mean *how* is your aunt the honourable?"

"Her husband was a son of Lord Northstone; brother to the present lord."

"I thought he was Admiral Penteith?"

"Just so. Admiral the Honourable Charles Penteith."

"I don't remember to have heard you or your father mention it before. Is Mrs. Penteith rich?"

"Yes. Fairly so."

"And you will probably come in for her riches, Godfrey."

"I'm sure I don't know. The matter does not trouble me."

Mary had listened to all this, without speaking. Godfrey saw her looking at him stealthily. Picking up the letter, he carried it out to put it in the post-bag.

The next day he started for Liverpool, stayed one day only with his aunt and then journeyed into Norfolk.

For more than a fortnight he remained in Norfolk, making inquiries, travelling about, hunting, getting more and more excited over his search at the unexpected difficulties which cropped up at every step.

At the end of that time he arrived at Southport, where Mrs. Penteith then was, harassed, worn out, baffled. She wondered what he had been doing with himself; but all she learnt in answer to her questions was that he had made a walking-tour and had done too much. He was restless, and at a week's end he told his aunt he thought he should go home.

"Well, do as you like, my dear boy," she answered. "I see you are not enjoying yourself much here, and that you have something on your mind that you will not tell me ; perhaps I have forgotten how to win a confidence. An old woman like me must leave that for somebody younger."

She spoke kindly, but was nevertheless a little hurt. She was a widow, had never had children of her own, and Godfrey was as a favourite son to her.

"Miss Thornhill will know how to find out what is the matter, Godfrey, and how to comfort you."

"Elspeth!" he exclaimed, with more contempt than he knew in his tone. "I should never tell her anything that I would not tell you."

This was the first time he had betrayed in words what Mrs. Penteith had been guessing. She had seldom visited the Abbey even during her sister's lifetime, and she did not at all remember the Vicar's daughters. Godfrey had told her of his engagement, and spoken in slight, vague terms of Elspeth's pretty looks and gentle manners; but she did not even know whether the girl was dark or fair. She thought she had discovered the cause of his trouble, and set a little trap for him later in the day, into which he fell blindly.

He was dutifully walking by the side of Mrs. Penteith's Bath-chair that afternoon when she noticed a pretty, fair-haired girl among the passers-by, and asked Godfrey if he did not admire her.

"Yes. Not bad-looking; rather washed out," said he, indifferently.

She presently drew his attention to the most admired girl in the place.

"Too massive," said Godfrey.

Then she tried him on a fair-haired girl, with a bright colour.

"Looks like a dairy-maid," pronounced he.

"You are difficult to please, Godfrey. What *do* you admire?"

"Well, for one thing, I like a girl to move gracefully, and you haven't pointed out one who does. One has a clumsy figure, another a stupid face. Above all, I can't admire a woman who has not some soul in her eyes, something to make them more interesting to look into than a pair of prettily coloured beads. Rich, yet soft dark eyes are what I like."

"I think that girl down there in the white dress, the one I pointed out to you first, has lovely eyes."

"I am not sure that light eyes are ever lovely."

"Ah, then Elspeth has dark eyes?"

Godfrey pulled himself up suddenly, and saw that he had been caught. He answered rather stiffly:

"Elspeth has blue eyes, neither light nor dark." Then, with a happy inspiration: "One chooses one's wife for something more important than the colour of her eyes, Aunt Margaret."

"Does one?" said Mrs. Penteith drily. "Then one has improved a good deal since my time."

"Aunt Madge, why are you catechising me to-day?" asked he presently, when both had been silently watching what they could see of the distant sea, which at Southport is generally out of sight. "Elspeth has the prettiest blue eyes that ever were seen. I wish you could see her," he continued, pumping up his raptures. "She has a dear little mouth, and dimples in her cheeks when she smiles, and ——"

"What made you propose to her, Godfrey?" asked his aunt, not magisterially but with warm interest.

"Propose! Why, what makes any man propose? I fell in love

with her because she was charming, and made up my mind to marry her—partly because everybody wanted me to marry."

"Everybody?"

"Well, my step-mother wanted me to, and my father dutifully followed suit. Indeed, I rather think she had something to do with my taking the final plunge."

"Ah, then you wanted a little leading and—drifted into it."

"Exactly. I suppose that is how these things generally happen. And I—I've been happier, since," avowed Godfrey, pulling himself together and trying to look triumphant.

Mrs. Penteith would not look incredulous. "That was rather disinterested of your step-mother, considering that she has a daughter of her own to marry. What is Miss Dixon like?"

But Godfrey was prepared for this, and answered accordingly. "A little, quiet girl, devoted to books; very ladylike and not bad-looking."

It would never do for his aunt to get the wild notion into her head that he was in love with Mary Dixon; with the girl whose suspected antecedents had just sent him off on a search, the results of which were weighing on his mind in the most alarming fashion. Mrs. Penteith spoke suddenly.

"Who is the lady with the graceful walk and the soft dark eyes, Godfrey?"

The blood rushed to his face; he darted at her a look of amazement, then laughed and stammered:

"Oh, that is my ideal, aunt. I've given up all hope of ever meeting her; one never does, you know."

"But one ought to think one has met her when one marries," said Mrs. Penteith, gravely.

"But I am not married yet, Aunt Madge."

"No, thank heaven. Don't laugh at me, Godfrey. I have thought about the time when you would love and marry as if you had been my own dear son, and prayed night and day that you might choose rightly. For love means to you more than it does to most men; with all my heart I believe that. Call me a sentimental old woman if you like, but ever since my dear sister's death, it seems to me that your heart, and mind too, have been lying idle, waiting for the woman who was to come and make a man of you. Don't be offended, Godfrey. I believe you are a good, kind-hearted fellow, with a hundred good and noble qualities tha nobody guesses; I think you want a wife, young and beautiful and good, to bring them out. If I had heard some years ago that you would love and marry the pretty, innocent little daughter of a clergyman, I should have thought my highest wishes for you fulfilled. But now I begin to think that this sweet Elspeth Thornhill is not the right girl after all. You want a woman who will rouse you, Godfrey, and stir you up to something—if it be only to great love for her."

He had listened to this—which Mrs. Penteith spoke in a broken

voice, looking at him with loving, shining eyes—with evident signs that he was moved by it. Then he raised his eyes to her face suddenly, saw her look, and, turning his head abruptly away, said, while the hand he had on her chair trembled:

"Aunt Madge, don't you know—don't you know that the women who rouse men most are—not the best?"

"Oh, Godfrey, for heaven's sake, you will not fall—you have not fallen—under the influence of one of those?" she whispered, her kind voice shaking as she put her hand on his.

"No, no, no, Aunt Margaret. Listen to me; don't be so frightened. My affection for Elspeth is wholesome and right, and will grow stronger the longer I know her; that must be love. Now if I were to feel stirred and roused and excited, as you would have me, I should know that it couldn't last, that it would be anger—or indignation—or hatred—or perhaps great admiration, but not love," stammered on Godfrey.

"Godfrey, tell me on your honour: do you love another woman?"

"No. The only one I love is Elspeth Thornhill."

Whether this was true or not, it was clear as day that he believed it.

His aunt leant back more satisfied. And the next day, without any more sermons or warnings, but with blessings for him and a present for Elspeth, she let him go: and, having been just three weeks away, he returned to Croxham.

CHAPTER IX.

A SIREN'S SONG.

THE first face to greet Godfrey Mayne on his return to the Abbey was Miss Dixon's: and it seemed to him that she looked at him mockingly, as if she had guessed his errand and its failure.

For he had failed in his researches so utterly that he had no course left but to acknowledge his defeat and wait for time or chance to set him on the right track. At the very outset he had been met by an unexpected difficulty: nobody in Norwich or its neighbourhood, to whom he applied, had ever heard of Dr. Dixon. He had made inquiries at the post-office, consulted directories, with the same result. His step-mother had so often alluded to her first husband as a doctor, that Godfrey knew he was not making any mistake. But he read carefully through the list of all the Dixons in Norfolk of whom he could find an account, he hunted out the tombstone of the only one who had died recently, and having found him to have been a widower and a wheelwright, he decided that he had no clue there.

This first defeat made the case look graver; for it involved a suspicion that not only Miss Dixon but her mother had given either a false name or a false indication of their late residence. The latter

he thought unlikely, for the references Mrs. Mayne had made from time to time to Norwich and its neighbourhood had slipped from her casually and naturally. As for the name, he could not remember the most trifling circumstance to induce suspicion that they had given a false one; but Godfrey determined to hunt out particulars of all the doctors, within reasonable range, who had died during the past four years. He found five.

The only one of these who had died in the neighbourhood of Norwich was a Dr. Davidson; he had died two years ago, aged seventy-two; but he was reported to have been a bachelor. However, Godfrey visited his tombstone, learnt in the village where he had lived that he had inhabited the same old house and been waited on by the same old housekeeper for thirty years, and having unearthed the housekeeper and found nothing suspicious in her answers to his questions, he had to come to the conclusion that there was no clue there. He let it go reluctantly, however, for "Dixon" seemed to him a likely change from "Davidson." He made a note of all these particulars.

The second dead doctor was a Mr. Farren, who had lived on the borders between Norfolk and Suffolk, and had left five daughters; but no suspicion could attach here. The third was a Dr. Lang, who had left no daughters at all. He made inquiries about both of these, and went to the places in which they had lived. There was nothing suspicious about either of them. Mr. Farren had lost his wife a year before his own death, and both names were on the tombstone over the grave where they were buried: three out of the five daughters were settled in the neighbourhood, the other two were abroad. Abroad! Godfrey's heart leaped up. But soon came the information that the Misses Farren kept a boarding-house at Boulogne-sur-mer. Then he visited the late home of Dr. Lang. This gentleman had had two sons. One of them had died; the other fell into wild habits and was shipped off by his father to the Colonies. The Doctor's widow had gone to Torquay. He was forty-six only when he died, and had had no daughters, no nieces. However, Godfrey entered all this in his notes.

The fourth doctor proved to have been only an apothecary and chemist, who had had a shrewish wife but no children. His name was Dale, and his widow had married his successor. Evidently there could be no track here; however, down it all went in Godfrey's note-book. The fifth and last was a Dr. Chorley, a man of supposed light character, but the ablest surgeon in the county. Two ladies were in existence, each claiming to be his widow; and a beautiful girl who passed for his niece, but might have been his daughter, had quitted Norfolk on his death, and was thought to have gone to London.

Godfrey steadied himself against the wall on which he was leaning, as the old village gossip, whom he was lazily interrogating, told him this.

"Went to London, eh? Was really his daughter, I suppose? Was she—was she a—*good* kind of girl?"

"Well, sir, I don't know. Folks did say queer things about her; but she was a pretty creature, with her great, soft eyes and her ——"

The blood seemed to rush up to Godfrey's head and dim his sight and dull his ears. For a moment he heard nothing more; then he recovered himself. The woman was talking on.

"They did say she did something to her hair to make it that yellow colour; but it never looked natural, to my thinking, with her black eyes."

"Were the eyes quite black?—or brown?"

"Well now, sir, I'd not like to be positive. She just looked a lovely picture, and so young and innocent. But there; one never knows."

Could this girl with the dyed hair have been Mary Dixon? He told himself with vehemence that it was impossible. The thought that the graceful, easy-mannered young woman, who was living quietly at the Abbey as a welcomed guest, could once have been—this, had so overwhelming a repugnance for him that for a few moments it made him sick and giddy.

"What was she like?" he asked. "Tall?—short?"

"Well, she was betwixt and between, sir, as well as I can recollect; but it's more nor three years ago now: not tall, for sure. I didn't see her often, for she rarely came to church. It was mostly driving by in her little pony-shay I used to see her. She had a pretty way with her—and pretty gowns she used to wear, too!"

Godfrey grew hot as he listened. The woman offered to show him the old house where the wicked doctor had lived. He could go over it if he liked, for it was to be let.

But, though he did do so, there was nothing in the damp empty rooms to dispel or confirm his doubts. He threw himself on a rustic seat in the weedy garden, and tried to think of some way out of the difficulty into which his inquiries had brought him. He had learnt enough to puzzle, but not to satisfy him. The description of one of the two ladies who claimed to be the doctor's widow was of a commonplace person, without any distinctive characteristic; she had left the neighbourhood before his death; while the girl, with whom she had lived amicably, did not leave it until afterwards. Were these two mother and daughter? Or was either of them really related to the Doctor? Were they a couple of adventuresses linked together for purposes of prey? Were they the two women now installed in comfort and security at the Abbey?

These questions, dwelling upon them day after day, and the impossibility of solving them, nearly upset Godfrey's brain. He returned to the Abbey from Liverpool looking jaded and miserable; ready to anathematise the impulse which had led him to rake up the ashes of a dozen dead lives only to be haunted by the images he had himself called forth.

On meeting Miss Dixon in the drawing-room ten minutes after his arrival, it was not surprising that he instantly found it necessary to walk off to the Vicarage. Since his aunt's words, he had thought more seriously of his engagement than he had ever done before, and had come to the conclusion that it was not fair either to Elspeth or himself to treat her like a doll; to talk nonsense to her when he was in a good humour and avoid her like the plague when he was not. Being nineteen, she was really no longer a child; and if she was to be a good, sensible, supportable wife to him, he must get her to share his tastes now, and teach her to sympathise with his feelings. Here was an excellent opportunity for a beginning. He had been away three weeks; she would doubtless see at once that he looked ill and worried, and he, instead of putting off her affectionate inquiries, would impart to her that he was so, and let her play at consoling him. Elspeth met him in the Vicarage garden.

"Oh, Godfrey, I'm so glad you are come!" she cried. "Now you can go with us to the bazaar at Cheston to-morrow. What a queer colour you are—all tanned! What have you been doing to yourself?"

He kissed her affectionately, but felt rather hurt. She was glad to see him indeed, and skipped about him in very sportive, lamb-like fashion; but these were not the ideal transports he was in the humour to have welcomed. Godfrey felt repressed.

"I have not been doing anything; I'm all right," he answered. "One does get tanned, I believe, when one is much in the open air."

"Well, you seem rather grumpy," said she, gaily. And he was hurt again.

Then he remembered that this was the mood he had always encouraged in her, and that this very gaiety, which jarred upon him a little at the moment, was the result of her pleasure at seeing him again. This was the time for his first lesson in a woman's duties as consoler and sympathiser.

"I've been a good deal bothered lately," said he.

"Have you, Godfrey? Is that why you went away?"

"No; but it is why I've come back."

This was not a lover's speech, and Elspeth was hurt in her turn.

"Oh, not to see me, then! Matilda said you didn't seem to trouble yourself to write very often."

"Matilda said so, did she?" said Godfrey, irritated. "I am not engaged to Matilda, and I don't see why she should concern herself with me or my letters. If I write often enough to please you, that is enough."

"But you don't. You hardly ever write at all; and when you do, you don't say much; nothing about the places you are at and what you see. They ask me at breakfast, when I get a letter from you, what you say, and there is never anything to tell them. And then they

tease me, papa and Matilda and Annette, and wonder that you can't write a long, amusing letter, and ask me how you spell, and—and make me cry."

"Well, in the last letter I told you I had neuralgia; and you never even asked me in your answer whether it was better."

"Oh, yes!" retorted Elspeth, with a new grievance, "you should have seen them when they worried me to know what you said, and I told them that. Papa said: 'Tell him to try Bunter's Nervine!' 'Say a flannel bandage is a very good thing,' said Matilda. And the children cut out a lot of advertisements from the back of—back of *Punch*, and pushed them under my door, and ran—ran away."

And at this description of the inhuman persecution she had suffered on his account, Elspeth fairly sobbed. So that he had to be the consoler after all. Calm was shortly restored, but he had put off his first lesson in the duties of woman as a sympathiser till another time: and as he returned to the Abbey for dinner he asked himself whether a sense of these duties should not be instinctive.

"Godfrey," said Mr. Mayne at dinner, "I spoke to Wilding about Dick—that you think he ought to be sent away, unless he can be kept from annoying his neighbours. The farmer was sorry, and quite civil over it, and seemed very much put out: but he says there is no place that he could send him to, and that he would never be happy anywhere else. He says, and there's something in it, I think, that to a lad in poor Dick's state of mind the lanes and trees and fields he has always known are better friends to him than human beings, that he talks to them and makes companions of them and would pine if he were sent away from them. He is sure Dick never meant any harm, and if you are afraid of him ——"

"I am not afraid of him," interrupted Godfrey, in a rather fiery tone, vexed at the subject's having been started before them all. "In Dick's unwarrantable dislike to me he has taken to play the part of a spy. He jumps over the wall and rambles in the garden, and peeps at me from behind hedges, and dodges my steps; as though I were a criminal, and he a very bad detective. I really think it is time his pranks should be put a stop to. There are proper places for imbeciles where they are well taken care of: why does not Wilding shut him up in one?"

Godfrey was interrupted by a low cry of indignation from Miss Dixon. Against his will, he glanced at her and saw that she was regarding him with flashing eyes and an expression of scornful condemnation. Angry before, it turned Godfrey nearly frantic. Who was this girl, that she should dare to take the liberty of reproving him? If—if certain doubts were correct, she might not be worthy to sit at his father's table. Fearing he should speak some rash word in his temper, Godfrey, partly forgetting himself, rose and quitted the table. His father, amazed at this breach of good manners, called after him; but to no purpose.

Godfrey soon cooled down in his own room. A little reflection made him feel ashamed of his rudeness. "I'm a greater fool than Dick!" was the pleasant conclusion which came to console him.

Before long, he heard voices in the garden, and saw his father and step-mother, prudently hatted and shawled, taking a Darby and Joan stroll along the paths. The weather was unusually warm for September, and the absence of mist that evening had tempted them out. Mary Dixon was no doubt in the drawing-room; he would go and apologise to her. Whatever she might be, he owed her that.

A faint idea had been floating in his mind that he might possibly find out from herself what her past life had been, and what the secret of it was: either by frank questioning, if he could see his way to it, or by crafty observation if he could not.

The lamp stood on the table when he entered, but it had not been turned up, and Miss Dixon was sitting in the twilight by one of the windows. She just turned her head to see who had come in, and then turned it back again. He went up and halted just in front of her, handling the ornaments on the top of a small cabinet.

"Miss Dixon," he began, swinging on his finger a little Dresden cup, "I don't know what to say about the rude way in which I left the dining-room this evening. You see, your first opinion of me, that I was a bear, was perfectly well-founded. I was tired with my journey and vexed at—at other things, and lost my temper. I feel very much ashamed of myself, I assure you."

"Quite unnecessarily, Mr. Godfrey. I had no business to interfere, by so much as a look, still less an exclamation, in a matter which did not concern me. I can only excuse myself by saying that poor Dick has taken a liking for me just as unreasonable as his dislike of you ——"

"Oh, no, not at all," interrupted Godfrey, politely.

"So that I could not bear the thought of his being sent away, and of losing the society of my friend, the idiot—the fool, you know," she added, with a rather malicious smile.

"That is ungenerous," returned Godfrey, leaning his elbow on the cabinet, close to a Venetian glass goblet. "You have had the discrimination to withhold your friendship from the worst fool about the place at any rate."

She looked at him as if she did not understand.

"You have never made friends with me."

"I don't think I have been intentionally frigid," said she, with a pretty air of rather coquettish indifference.

"Then it must be, that we have both played at cross-purposes with each other," said Godfrey, forgetting animosity altogether as he watched her beautiful face looking out into the twilight. "Don't you think your greeting this afternoon on my return after three weeks' absence was rather cold, considering ——"

"Considering the object of your absence?" retorted she, with most

unexpected fire, as she turned her face and her flashing eyes upon him.

"I—I don't understand," said Godfrey, taken aback.

"I think you do; I think you must. Believe me, I should not excuse so sweetly your conduct at dinner had I not made allowance for your annoyance at having wasted so much of your time in a fruitless search."

Godfrey had got back his self-command, and was looking at her with a very natural air of amazement. He thought this was only a stratagem to find out where he had been, for he had taken care that the two letters he had sent to his father while in Norfolk should not bear the Norfolk post-mark. Still, she had made a very shrewd guess.

"I beg your pardon, but I—what search, Miss Dixon?"

"Your search down in Norfolk."

He started in spite of himself, ever so slightly, but perceptibly to the keen eyes watching him. "Norfolk? what on earth should take me to Norfolk?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Do, please."

"You went there—having heard my mother refer to it as the county in which some years of her life with her first husband were passed—to try to find out more about us than she had thought proper to tell you. You had got it into your head that there was something in the past history of one or both of us that we were concealing, and that you were anxious to discover. It was not enough for you that your father was satisfied with the account of herself given by the lady he married, or that I, her daughter, so far from forcing myself upon your household, had come in the first instance against my will. That little fact, whatever it might be, which you imagined we did not wish you to know, acquired such fascination for you that it made you forget the claims of chivalry and hospitality, and sent you roaming about the country on a wild search for some proofs of something or other that would enable you to crush two defenceless women."

She had changed her position from leaning back to leaning forward, during this speech, but she sat very quietly, with one hand clasping tightly the arm of her chair. Her voice did not rise high; but its low, full tones impressed him none the less. He stood before her, ashamed and silent, when she paused. When at last he did speak, he could not command his voice; it was harsh and broken.

"Miss Dixon," he said, "I think I have been mad. I hope you will think so, for then you may perhaps forgive me, as you would forgive Dick. I cannot understand myself; or what it is that has been the matter with me. For the last few weeks I have been haunted by a sort of fever attacking me in all sorts of ways. It is true. If you cannot forget my odious conduct at once, as I hope to heaven you

may, I trust you will believe that in my old, sober senses I could no more have been guilty of it than—than my father could."

He was not acting now. In the utter repentance, the shame which her words had awakened in him, he absolutely seemed to doubt his own identity; to think it impossible that he, a gentleman, with all a gentleman's instincts, could have done this. He was slowly turning away from her to leave the room, when she stopped him.

"No, please stay one moment," cried she, taking his hand, her voice sweet and winning again. "After all, it was partly my own fault that you formed a bad opinion of me—of us. I know you overheard a conversation which I afterwards tried to account for rather clumsily; by telling you something that was only partly true."

"That does not excuse me," put in Godfrey.

"It does partly, I think. Falsehoods, found out, must always breed suspicion. Besides, your doubts were not without reason. There *is* something my mother and I wish to conceal. It does not concern you or your father in the remotest way, and you will never find it out. As for your hunting for some traces of our life in Norfolk ——"

"Do you not see how miserable you are making me?" broke out Godfrey, in impatient pain.

But she continued, without mercy. "It will always be useless as far as I am concerned, for the reason that I never was there. I was born in London and left there; it was before my father and mother settled in Norfolk," she added, after a moment's pause. "Let me ask you just this one thing. If, in spite of yourself, your suspicions should ever be roused again concerning either or both of us ——"

"Miss Dixon!"

"You may not be able to help it. A secret, however unimportant, is always suspicious. I repeat then, if you should ever doubt the integrity of either of us towards your family, do not hastily mention your own doubts to your father."

"I see. Of course you will never believe now that I can possess any of the feelings of a gentleman," said Godfrey, deeply wounded, but with pride in his tone.

She raised her head and looked straight up into his face with perfectly grave, frank eyes. "Please don't think I am so silly. I have never doubted that for a moment. I was going to say: however serious your doubts may grow, spare my mother as long as you can. She has had very great troubles, and," Miss Dixon's face grew soft and her voice tender, "I want her to keep to the end—if that should be possible—the happiness she has found so late. She is the most devoted woman I have ever known, she has grown fond of your father, she makes him a good wife. Just think of what I say, if ever any allusion to her past troubles should rouse your suspicions again. I think—I think that is all."

She released his hand, seeming only then to become aware that she had been holding it. She was very quiet outwardly, but it was easy

to see that she was as much excited as he was himself, though not with all the same feelings. The re-action, after his dark suspicions, had roused in Godfrey a feeling of wild devotion to this beautiful girl with the strangely touching voice, and mournful, eloquent eyes. The clasp of her slight fingers round his own hand had sent a thrill through his veins. When she turned back to the seat she had left by the window, he followed her. She looked up at him in surprise.

"I am very miserable," said he. And he looked it.

"I am afraid it is my fault," she remarked, very gently, rising again. "I will make what amends I can. You are fond of music?"

"Yes, passionately."

"Then I will give you a pleasure, if it proves a pleasure," she said, moving towards the piano. "But I can only do it at the cost of great pain to myself. Will that satisfy you?"

The character of her excitement had quite changed. Instead of being outwardly calm, her hands now moved restlessly, her lips trembled, her eyes glanced about the room.

"No, of course that will not satisfy me," replied Godfrey, wounded again. "I have caused you pain enough already; I ——"

"Sit there, please," she said, imperiously, indicating a chair.

"But I thought you did not play," he exclaimed, involuntarily. Indeed that had been one of his private grievances against her.

She sat down to the piano without reply. He had obeyed her, and listened wonderingly while her fingers felt their way upon the notes with faint timid sounds, as hands do that have not touched a once familiar instrument for some time. She fell into an air that was unknown to him and played it over two or three times with tender, musicianly touch, but without any special power of exciting enthusiasm; then the melody changed to an accompaniment. The first notes of her voice chained his attention; before the end of the first verse he had risen to his feet and was drawn nearer and nearer to her by an attraction he could not resist, till the end of the song found him at her side on a low ottoman, looking up at her face, which it was too dark for him to see clearly, with the rapture of a worshipper.

He had known by the very first notes that it was not merely an ordinarily good voice he was listening to, and long before the song was over he had recognised that it was not to an ordinarily good singer. It was to one of those voices that the world waits for, cultivated as the world demands. His passionate love of music had never been gratified so before. For to the charms of the rich melody were added the seductions of twilight, of surprise, and the youth and beauty of the girl from whose lips the enthralling sound came.

It was not until she had sung the last note and her fingers remained inactive upon the keys, that Godfrey, half on his knees beside her, and stammering incoherent words of thanks, discovered that his step-mother was in the room. She was standing behind them, her back to the dim light of the lamp, which had not yet been turned up;

but even in the darkness of the gathering night he could see by the trembling of her whole frame, as he could hear in her panting breathing, that she was much agitated, and that the feeling which agitated her was terror. Neither of them, absorbed in the music, had heard her entrance, but they became aware of her presence at the same moment.

Miss Dixon rose, tottered as she did so, and her fingers, as she leant on the side of the key-board for support, touched Godfrey's. Her hand was cold and wet. He would have supported her with his arm; but she shrank away and fell on her mother's shoulder.

"I'm quite well—quite right, mamma," said she, faintly. "It is only the old story."

"Godfrey, send Lydia here with the eau-de-Cologne," said Mrs. Mayne, abruptly.

He left them, told the maid she was wanted, and brought the eau-de-Cologne himself. But he was not admitted; Mrs. Mayne took it from him at the door.

"Is she better?" he asked, anxiously.

"Yes. Godfrey, I left your father in the lane, talking with Mr. Wilding. Will you go, and contrive to keep him from coming in for a little while. It would upset him to find Mary ill."

Godfrey met his father coming towards home. The latter, who had not seen his son since his ill-behaviour at dinner, accosted him banteringly.

"Well, I am glad to see you taking a walk by yourself, Godfrey. You have been beguiling the time, I hope, by some salutary reflections."

"Yes," said Godfrey. "I've been wondering when Horrocks means to send home my shooting-boots."

"Then you are not troubled with remorse for having behaved like a clown at the dinner-table?"

"Something had very much put me out," acknowledged the young man. "I have made my apology to the person to whom apology was chiefly necessary, and it has been accepted."

"Oh, have you; that's all right then," returned his good-natured and easy father, a little surprised notwithstanding, apologies not being much in Godfrey's line.

"Godfrey," he said presently, after they had walked a little, exchanging remarks on indifferent topics, "there's a subject that your mother thinks—that I think, I mean," broke off Mr. Mayne, awkwardly, with a cough, "that we should begin to prepare for. I mean your marriage."

"Oh—ah—yes, of course we must begin to think about that," agreed Godfrey, in a vague kind of tone. "Very considerate of my step-mother!"

"Well, she's quite right: it *is* time you married."

"Quite, sir—no doubt."

"The question to be considered, Godfrey, is—where would you

like to settle? Would you like to bring your wife to the Abbey?—we could have that unused wing put into order for your separate use—or would you prefer to make your home elsewhere?"

"I have not thought about it," replied Godfrey.

"Your allowance will be suitable in any case. Of course you know that."

"Thank you, sir. But it seems to me that all this is premature. I and Elspeth have been engaged for two months, or so; and the Vicar especially warned me he did not wish to hurry matters, that she was full young for that."

"And you fall in with his view! I must say, Godfrey, you are not a very ardent bridegroom."

"I am not a bridegroom yet," was the retort, spoken in haste. "I think, father, it might be better for me to get into something first; something that would take me away from here altogether. I am sick and tired of leading an aimless, idle life."

"I'm uncommonly glad to hear *that!*" cried Mr. Mayne. "Some Government post, I suppose you mean; a little easy employment might be good for you. I dare say my cousin Abbotsford could manage it. Well, we must think about it all."

"Yes, we can think about it: plenty of time," replied Godfrey, as his father left him.

He lit a cigar and remained pacing the walks, lost in reflections—not of his marriage. Had Mary Dixon been a public singer? Would she and her mother, one of them undoubtedly clever, take so much pains and lay themselves open to suspicion for so paltry a secret? He could not think so. Why had she avoided music altogether since she came to the Abbey, letting it be thought that she could neither play nor sing? Why had she so suddenly undeceived him? She had sung to him in a way that could but betray her artistic training to his critical ear; and it seemed to have terribly agitated her.

She had intimated to him that evening that her secret of the past was a trifling one; that it did not concern him; that he would never find it out: but, yet, in spite of his shame, when she accused him of want of chivalry and of hospitality, he had said to himself that it was *not* a trifle, that it *did* concern him, and that he *would* find it out. One little item in her explanation had struck him as being untenable—that she had never been in Norfolk; that when her father and mother went to settle there, they left her, a baby, behind them in London. Godfrey did not know much about babies; still he thought they were not often abandoned like that by their parents.

Yet he hoped against hope that her public appearance as a singer might really be at the root of the matter, and that she and her mother did not like to confess to it. But, if so, why had she given it up—to go roving over the Continent with an old lady, and to bury herself at Croxham Abbey? However it might be, Godfrey was conscious that his heart welled up in tenderness for the sweet and fragile girl:

and he was also conscious that he was presenting in himself a marvellous contradiction.

When Godfrey got back to the drawing-room, Mary Dixon was correcting a blunder in her mother's crewel work; Mrs. Mayne sat watching the girl's fingers with interest. His father jumped up from his arm-chair as he entered.

"Godfrey, at last! What a time you have stayed out. Laura, suppose we have a game at cards? You and Mary play whist, I suppose? We have never played since you came here."

He had gone to a card-table which stood folded in a corner of the room, and was taking out the cards, with his back to the rest. Godfrey stood by the mantel-piece. At the mention of cards, he saw Mrs. Mayne start; but she made no answer. Mr. Mayne repeated his question.

"You both play whist, of course?"

"No; I don't play cards at all," she answered then. "Nor does Mary."

Her voice was so much altered that her husband wheeled round. "But why? You do not mean to say you disapprove of a harmless hand at cards, Laura! You cannot think it wicked to play?"

"No—but—I never play. I am tired, too. Do please excuse me, Henry," she added, rising. Mary was still bending over her work.

But Mr. Mayne did not like to be thwarted (when he knew it), even in trifles.

"Am I to understand that it is a matter of principle with you and with Mary? What harm can lie in a quiet game of cards at home? It is not gambling. Gambling of course is dreadful. Why, I knew an awful instance of the danger of that among my own acquaintance. A son of Sir William Hunt ——"

Mrs. Mayne's work-basket slipped from her hands to the floor. Godfrey drew near to pick up the scattered trifles; and Mr. Mayne resumed the thread of his discourse.

"It was his eldest son—William Hunt's; a friend of mine. He has a place near here, and he has just got back to it from Scotland. The poor lad, Willie ——"

Mrs. Mayne fell back in her chair; her daughter rose quickly and bent over her. Mr. Mayne stared helplessly. Godfrey rang the bell.

"Don't be frightened," said Mary, "mamma will be better directly. She is only faint from a little over-fatigue: she walked about too long after dinner."

Mary Dixon was calm and white as a statue of stone. But Godfrey, who had been observant since the first mention of the cards, saw that some strange excitement was burning in her sad dark eyes.

(To be continued.)

ROGER BEVERE.

ROGER'S SKELETON.

PEOPLE say you can never sleep well in a strange bed. I know I did not sleep well, but very badly, that first night at Lady Bevere's. It was not the fault of the bed, or of its strangeness; it was Roger's trouble haunting me.

He did not seem to have slept well either, to judge by his looks when I went into his room in the morning. His fair, pleasant face was pale; his lips trembled, the blue eyes had torment in their depths.

"I have had a bad dream," he said, in answer to a remark I made. "An awful dream. It came to me in my last sleep this morning; and morning dreams, they say, come true. I'm afraid I have you to thank for it, Johnny."

"Me!"

"You suggested last night, startling me well-nigh out of my senses by it, that Lizzie might follow me down here. Well, I dreamt she did so. I saw her in the dining-room, haranguing my mother, her red-gold hair streaming over her shoulders and her arms stretched wildly out. Uncle John stood in a corner of the room, looking on."

I felt sorry, and told him so: of course my speaking had prompted the dream. He need not fear. If Lizzie did not know he had come down here, or that his family lived here, or anything about them, she could not follow him.

"You see shadows where no shadows are, Roger."

"When a man spoils his life on its threshold, it is all shadow; past, present, and future."

"Things may mend, you know."

"Mend!" he returned: "how can they mend? They may grow worse; never mend. My existence is one long torment. Day by day I live in dread of what may come: of her bringing down upon herself some public disgrace and my name with it. No living being, man or woman, can imagine what it is to me; the remorse for my folly, the mortification, the shame. I believe honestly that but for a few things instilled into me at my mother's knee in childhood, I should have put an end to myself."

"It is a long lane that has no turning."

"Lanes have different outlets: bad as well as good."

"I think breakfast must be ready, Roger."

"And I started with prospects so fair!" he went on. "Never a thought or wish in my heart but to fulfil honestly the duties that lay

in my way to the best of my power, to God and to man. And I should have done it, but for——Johnny Ludlow," he broke off, with a deep breath of emotion, "when I see other young fellows travelling along the same wrong road, once earnest, well-meaning lads as I was, not turning aside of their own wilful, deliberate folly, but ensnared to it by the evil works and ways they encounter in that teeming city, my soul is wrung with pity for them. I sometimes wonder whether God will punish them for what they can hardly avoid; or whether He will not rather let His anger fall on those who throw temptations in their way."

Poor Roger, poor Roger! Mr. Brandon used to talk of the skeleton in *his* closet: he little suspected how terrible was the skeleton in Roger's.

Lady Bevere kept four servants: for she was no better off, except for a little income that belonged to herself, than is many another admiral's widow. An upper maid, Harriet, who helped to wait, and did sewing: a housemaid and a cook; and an elderly man, Jacob, who had lived with them in the time of Sir Edmund.

During the afternoon of this day, Saturday, Roger and I set off to walk to Brighton with the two girls. Not by the high road, but by a near way (supposed to cut off half the distance) across a huge, dreary, flat marsh, of which you could see neither the beginning nor the end. In starting, we had reached the gate at the foot of the garden, when Harriet came running down the path. She was a tall, thin, civil young woman, with something in her voice or in her manner of speaking that seemed to my ear familiar, though I knew not how or why.

"Miss Mary," she said, "my lady asks have you taken umbrellas, if you please. She thinks it will snow when the sun goes down."

"Yes, yes; tell mamma we have them," replied Mary: and Harriet ran back.

"How was it the mother came to so lonely a spot as this?" questioned Roger, as we went along, the little one, Tottams, jumping around me. "You girls must find it lively?"

Mary laughed as she answered. "We *do* find it lively, Roger, and we often ask her why she came. But when mamma and George looked at the place, it was a bright, hot summer's day. They liked it then: it has plenty of rooms in it, you see, though they are old-fashioned; and the rent was so very reasonable. Be quiet, Tottams."

"So reasonable that I should have concluded the place had a ghost in it," said Roger.

"George's curacy was at Brighton in those days, you know, Roger: that is why we came to the neighbourhood."

"And George had left for a better curacy before you had well settled down here! Miss Tottams, if you pull at Johnny Ludlow like that, I shall send you back by yourself."

"True. But we like the place very well now we are used to it, and we know a few nice people. One family—the Archers—we like

very much. Six daughters, Roger; one of them, Bessy, would make you a charming wife. You will have to marry, you know, when you set up in practice. They are coming to us next Wednesday evening."

My eye caught Roger's. I did not intend it. Caught the bitter expression in it as he turned away.

Brighton reached, we went on the pier. Then, while they did some commissions for Lady Bevere at various shops, I went to the post office, to register two letters for Mr. Brandon. Tottams wanted to keep with me, but they took her, saying she'd be too troublesome. The letters registered, I came out of the office, and was turning away, when someone touched me on the arm.

"Mr. Ludlow, I think! How are you?"

To my surprise it was Richard Scott. He seemed equally surprised to see me. I told him I had come down with Roger Bevere to spend Christmas week at Prior's Glebe.

"Lucky fellow!" exclaimed Scott. "I have to go back to London and drudgery this evening: came down with my governor last night for an operation to-day. Glad to say it's all well over."

But a thought had flashed into my mind: I ought not to have said so much. Drawing Scott out of the passing crowd, I spoke.

"Look here, Scott: you must be cautious not to say that Bevere's down here. You must not speak of it."

"Speak where?" asked Scott, turning his head towards me. He had put his arm within mine as we walked along. "Where?"

"Oh—well—up with you, you know—in Bevere's old quarters. Or—or in the railway-room at the Bell-and-Clapper."

Scott laughed. "*I* understand. Madam Lizzie might be coming after him to his mother's. But—why, what an odd thing!"

Some thought seemed to have struck him suddenly. He paused in his walk as well as in his speech.

"I dare say it was nothing," he added, going on again. "Be at ease as to Bevere, Ludlow. I should as soon think of applying to him a lighted fire-brand."

"But what is it you call odd?" I asked, feeling sure that, whatever it might be, it was connected with Bevere.

"Why this," said Scott. "Last night, when we got here, I left my umbrella in the carriage, having a lot of other things to see to of my own and the governor's. I went back as soon as I found it out, but could hear nothing of it. Just now I went up again and got it"—slightly showing the green silk one he held in his hand. "A train from London came in while I stood there, bringing a heap of passengers. One of them looked like Lizzie."

I could not speak from consternation.

"Having nothing to do while waiting for my umbrella to be brought, I was watching the crowd flock out of the station," continued Scott. "Amidst it I saw a head of red-gold hair, just like

Lizzie's. I could not see more of her than that; some other young woman's head was close to hers."

"But do you think it was Lizzie?"

"No, I do not. So little did I think it that it went clean out of my mind until you spoke. It must have been some accidental resemblance; nothing more; red-gold hair is not so very uncommon There's nothing to bring her down to Brighton."

"Unless she knows that he is here."

"That's impossible."

"What a wretched business it is altogether!"

"You might well say that if you knew all," returned Scott. "She drinks like a fish. Like a fish, I assure you. Twice over she has had a shaking-fit of three days' duration—I suppose you take me, Ludlow—had to be watched in her bed; the last time was not more than a week ago. She'll do for herself, if she goes on. It's an awful clog on Bevere. The marriage in itself was a piece of miserable folly, but if she had been a different sort of woman and kept herself steady and cared for him ——"

"The problem to me is, how Bevere could have been led away by such a woman."

"Ah, but you must not judge of that by what she is now. She was a very attractive girl, and kept her manners within bounds. Just the kind of girl that many a silly young ape would lose his head for; and Bevere, I take it, lost his heart as well as his head."

"Did you know of the marriage at the time?"

"Not until after it had taken place."

"They could never have pulled well together as man and wife; two people so opposite as they are."

"No, I fancy not," answered Richard Scott, looking straight out before him, but as though he saw nothing. "She has not tried at it. Once his wife, safe and sure, she thought she had it all her own way—as of course in one sense she had, and could give the reins to her inclination. Nothing that Bevere wanted her to do, would she do. He wished her to give up all acquaintance with the two girls at the Bell-and-Clapper; but not she. He ——"

"Is Miss Panken flourishing?"

"Quite," laughed Scott. "The other one came to grief—Mabel Falkner."

"Did she! I thought she seemed rather nice."

"She was a very nice little girl indeed, as modest as Polly Panken is impudent. The one could take care of herself; the other couldn't—or didn't. Well, Mabel fell into trouble, and of course lost her post. Madam Lizzie immediately gave her house-room, setting Bevere, who forbade it, at defiance. What with grief and other disasters, the girl fell sick there; had an illness, and had to be kept I don't know how long. It put Bevere out uncommonly."

"Is this lately?"

"Oh no; last year. Lizzie—by the way," broke off Scott, stopping again and searching his pocket, "I've got a note from her for Bevere. You can give it him."

The words nearly scared away my senses. A note from Lizzie to Bevere! "Why then she must know he is here!" I cried.

"You don't understand," quietly said Scott, giving me a note from his pocket-book. "A day or two ago, I met Lizzie near the Bell-and-Clapper. She ——"

"She is well enough to be out, then!"

"Yes. At times she is as well as you are. Well, I met her, and she began to give me a message for her husband, which I could not then wait to hear. So she sent this note to me later, to be delivered to him when we next met. I had not time to go to him yesterday, and here the note is still."

It was addressed "Mr. Bevary." I pointed out the name to Scott.

"Does she not know better, think you?"

"Very likely not," he answered. "A wrong letter, more or less, in a name, signifies but little to one of Lizzie's standard of education. It is not often, I expect, she sees the name on paper, or has to write it. Fare you well, Ludlow. Remember me to Bevere."

Scott had hardly disappeared when they met me. I said nothing of having seen him. After treating Tottams to some tarts and a box of bonbons, we set off home again; the winter afternoon was closing, and it was nearly dark when we arrived. Getting Roger into his room, I handed him the note, and told him how I came by it. He showed me the contents.

"Dear Roger.—When you where last at home, you said you should not be able to spend Christmas with me, so I am thinking of trying a little jaunt for myself. I am well now and mean to keep so, and a few days in the country air may help me and set me up prime. I inscribe this to let you know, and also to tell you that I shall pay my journey with the quarter's rent you left, so you must send or bring the sum again. Aunt Dyke has got the rumaticks fine, she can't come bothering me with her lectures quite as persistent as usual. Wishing you the compliments of the season, I remain, Your affectionate wife, Lizzie."

"Gone into Essex, I suppose; she has talked sometimes of her cousin there," was all the remark made by Bevere. And he set the note alight, and sent it blazing up the chimney. Of course I did not mention Scott's fancy about the red-gold hair.

II.

Sunday. We crossed the waste land in the morning to the little church I have spoken of. A few cottages stood about it, and a public-house with a big sign, on which was painted a yellow bunch of wheat, and the words The Sheaf o' Corn. It was bitterly-cold weather, the

wind keen and cutting, the ground a sort of grey-white from a sprinkling of snow that had fallen in the night. I suppose they don't, as a rule, warm these rural churches, from want of means or energy, but I think I never felt a church so cold before. Mr. Brandon said it had given him a chill.

In the evening, after tea, we went to church by moonlight. Not all of us this time. Mr. Brandon stayed away to nurse his chill, and Roger on the plea of headache. The snow was beginning to come down smartly. The little church was lighted with candles stuck in tin sconces nailed to the wall, and was dim enough. Lady Bevere whispered to me that the clergyman had a service elsewhere in the afternoon, so could only hold his own in the evening.

It was snowing with a vengeance when we came out—large flakes half as big as a shilling, and in places already a foot deep. We made the best of our way home, and were white objects when we got there.

"Ah!" remarked Mr. Brandon, "I thought we should have it. Hope the wind will go down a little now."

The girls and their mother went upstairs to take off their cloaks. I asked Mr. Brandon where Roger was. He turned round from his warm seat by the fire to answer me.

"Roger is outside, enjoying the benefit of the snow-storm. That young man has some extraordinary care upon his conscience, Johnny, unless I am mistaken," he added, his thin voice emphatic, his eyes throwing an enquiry into mine.

"Do you fancy he has, sir?" I stammered. At which Mr. Brandon threw a searching look at me, as if he had a mind to tax me with knowing what it was.

"Well, you had better tell him to come in, Johnny."

Roger's great coat, hanging in the hall, seemed to afford an index that he had not strayed beyond the garden. The snow, coming down so thick and fast but a minute or two ago, had temporarily ceased, following its own capricious fashion, and the moon was bright again. Calling aloud to Roger as I stood on the door-step, and getting no answer, I went out to look for him.

On the side of the garden facing the church, was a little entrance gate, amid the clusters of laurels and other shrubs. Hearing footsteps approach this, and knowing all were in from church, for the servants got back before we did, I went down the narrow cross-path leading to it, and looked out. It was not Roger, but a woman. A lady, rather, by what the moonbeams displayed of her dress, which looked very smart. As she seemed to be making for the gate, I stepped aside into the shrubs, and peered out over the moor for Roger. The lady gave a sharp ring at the bell, and old Jacob came from the side door of the house to answer it.

"Is this Prior's Glebe?" she asked—and her voice gave an odd thrill to my pulses, for I thought I recognised it.

"Yes, ma'am," said Jacob.

"Lady Beveer's, I think.

"That's near enough," returned Jacob, familiar with the eccentricities of pronunciation accorded to the name. "What did you please to want?"

"I want Miss Field."

"Miss Field!" echoed the old man.

"Harriet Field. She lives here, don't she? I'd like to see her."

"O—Harriet! I'll send her out," said he, turning away.

The more I heard of the voice, the greater grew my dismay. Surely it was that of Roger's wife! Was it really she that Scott had seen at the station? Had she come after Roger? Did she know he was here? I stood back amid the sheltering laurels, hardly daring to breathe. Waiting there, she began a little dance, or shuffle of the feet, perhaps to warm herself, and broke into a verse of a gay song. "As I live, she's not sober!" was the fear that flashed across me. Harriet, her things still on, just as she came in from church, came swiftly to the gate.

"Well, Harriet, how are you?"

"Why, Lizzie!—it's never you!" exclaimed Harriet, after an amazed stare at the visitor.

"Yes, it's me. I thought I'd come over and see you. That old man was polite though, to leave me standing here."

"But where have you come from? And why are you so late?"

"Oh, I'm staying at Brighton; came down on the spree yesterday. I'm late because I lost my way on this precious moor—or whatever it calls itself—and got a mile, or so, too far. When the snow came on—and ain't it getting deep!—I turned into a house to shelter a bit, and here I am. A man that was coming out of church yonder directed me to the place here."

She must have been at The Sheaf o' Corn. What it she had chanced to ask the route of *me!*

"You got my letter, then, telling you I had left my old place at Worthing, and taken service here," said Harriet.

"I got it safe enough; it was directed to the Bell-and-Clapper room," returned Lizzie. "What a stick of a hand you do write!—I couldn't decipher whether your new mistress was Lady Beveen or Lady Beveer. I had thought you never meant to write to me again."

"Well, you know, Lizzie, that quarrel between us years back, after father and mother died, was a bitter one; but I'm sure I don't want to be anything but friendly for the future. You haven't written, either. I never had but that one letter from you, telling me you had got married and that he was a gentleman."

"And you wrote back asking whether it was true, or whether I had jumped over the broomstick," retorted Lizzie, with a laugh. "You always liked to be polite to me, Harriet."

"Do you ever see Uncle Dyke up in London, Lizzie?"

"And Aunt Dyke too—she's his second, you know. They are both flourishing just now with rheumatism. He has got it in his chest, and she in her knees—tra, la, la, la! I say, are you not going to invite me in?"

Lizzie's conversation had been interspersed with laughs and antics. I saw Harriet look at her keenly. "Was it a public-house you took shelter in, Lizzie?" she asked.

"As if it could have been a private one! That's good."

"Is your husband with you at Brighton?—I suppose you *are* married, Lizzie?"

"As safe as that you are an old maid—or going on for one. My husband's a doctor and can't leave his patients. I came down with a friend of mine, Miss Panken; she has to go back to-night, but I mean to stay over Christmas Day. I'll tell you all about my husband if you'll be civil enough to take me indoors."

"I can't take you in to-night, Lizzie. It's too late, for one thing, and we must not have visitors on a Sunday. But you can come over to tea to-morrow evening; I'm sure my lady won't object. Come early in the afternoon. And look here," added Harriet, dropping her voice, "don't *drink* anything beforehand; come quiet and decent."

"Who has been telling you that I do drink?" demanded Lizzie, in a sharp tone.

"Well, nobody has told me. But I can see it. I hope it's not a practice with you; that's all."

"A practice! There you go! It wouldn't be you, Harriet, if you didn't say something unpleasant. One must take a sup of hot liquor when benighted in such freezing snow as this. And I did not put on my warm cloak; it was fine and bright when I started."

"Shall I lend you one?—I'll get it in a minute.—Or a waterproof?"

"Thanks all the same, no; I shall walk fast, I don't feel cold—and I should only have the trouble of bringing it back to-morrow afternoon. I'll be here by three o'clock. Good night, Harriet."

"Good night, Lizzie. Go round to that path that branches off from our front gate; keep straight on, and you can't miss the way."

I had heard it all; every syllable; unable to help it. The least rustle of the laurels might have betrayed me. Betrayed me to Lizzie.

What a calamity! She did not appear to have come down after Roger, did not appear to know that he was connected with Lady Bevere—or that the names were the same. But at the tea-table the following evening she would inevitably learn all. Servants talk of their masters and their doings. And to hear Roger's name would be ruin.

I found Roger in his chamber. "Uncle Brandon was putting inconvenient questions to me," he said, "so I got away under pretence of looking at the weather.—How cold you look, Johnny!"

"I am cold. I went into the garden, looking for you, and I had a fright there."

"Seen a ghost?" returned he, lightly.

"Something worse than a ghost. Roger, I have some disagreeable news for you."

"Eh?—what?" he cried, his fears leaping up: indeed they were very seldom *down*. "They don't suspect anything, do they?—What is it? Why do you beat about the bush?"

"I should like to prepare you. If ——"

"Prepare me!" sharply interrupted Roger, his nerves all awry. "Do you think I am a girl? Don't I live always in too much mental excruciation to need preparation for any mortal ill?"

"Well, Lizzie's down here."

In spite of his boast, he turned as white as the counterpane on his bed. I sat down and told him all. His hair grew damp as he listened, his face took the hue of despair.

"Heaven help me!" he gasped.

"I suppose you did not know Harriet was her sister?"

"How was I to know it? Be you very sure Lizzie would not voluntarily proclaim to me that she had a sister in service. What wretched luck! Oh, Johnny, what is to be done?"

"Nothing—that I see. It will be sure to come out over their tea to-morrow. Harriet will say 'Mr. Roger's down here on a visit, and has brought Mr. Johnny Ludlow with him'—just as a little item of gossip. And then—why then Lizzie will make but one step of it into the family circle, and say 'Roger is my husband.' It is of no use to mince the matter, Bevere," I added, in answer to a groan of pain; "better look the worst in the face."

The worst was a very hopeless worst. Even if we could find out where she was staying in Brighton, and he or I went to her to try to stop her coming, it would not avail; she would come all the more.

"You don't know her depth," groaned Roger. "She'd put two and two together, and jump to the right conclusion—that it is my home. No, there's nothing that can be done, nothing; events must take their course. Johnny," he passionately added, "I'd rather die than face the shame."

Lady Bevere's voice on the stairs interrupted him. "Roger! Johnny! Why don't you come down? Supper's waiting."

"I can't go down," he whispered.

"You must, Roger. If not, they'll ask the reason why."

A fine state of mental turbulence we were in all day on Monday. Roger dared not stir abroad lest he should meet her and have to bring her home clinging to his coat-tails. Not that much going abroad was practicable, save in the beaten paths. Snow had fallen heavily all night long. But the sky to-day was blue and bright.

With the afternoon began the watching and listening. I wonder

whether the reader can picture our mental state? Roger had made a resolve that as soon as Lizzie's foot crossed the threshold, he would disclose all to his mother, forestalling her tale. Indeed, he could do nothing less. Says Lord Byron, "Whatever sky's above me, here's a heart for every fate." I fear we could not then have said the same.

Three o'clock struck. Roger grew pale to the lips as he heard it. I am not sure but I did. Four o'clock struck; and yet she did not come. The suspense, the agony of those few afternoon hours brought enough pain for a lifetime.

At dusk, when she could not have known me at a distance, I went out to reconnoitre, glad to go somewhere or do something, and prowled about under shelter of the dark shrubs, watching the road. She was not in sight anywhere; coming from any part; though I stayed there till I was blue with cold.

"Not in a state to come, I expect," gasped Roger, when I got in, and reported that I could see nothing of her, and found him still sitting over the dining-room fire.

He gave a start as the door was flung open. It was only Harriet with the tea-tray and candles. We had dined early. George, the clergyman, was expected in the evening, and Lady Bevere thought it would be more sociable if we all took supper with him. Tottams followed the tea-tray, skipping and singing.

"I wish it was Christmas Eve every day!" cried the child. "Cook's making such a lot of mince pies and cakes in the kitchen."

"Why, dear me, somebody has been drawing the curtains without having shut the shutters first!" exclaimed Harriet, hastening to remedy the mistake.

I could have told her it was Roger. As the daylight faded and the fire brightened, he had shut out the window, lest dreaded eyes should peer through it and see him.

"Your sister's not come yet, Harriet!" said Tottams. For the advent of Harriet's expected visitor was known in the household.

"No, Miss Tottams, she is not," replied Harriet. "I can't think why, unless she was afraid of the snow underfoot."

"There's no snow to hurt along the paths," contended Tottams.

"Perhaps she'd not know that," said Harriet. "But she may come yet; it is only five o'clock—and it's a beautiful moon."

Roger got up to leave the room and met Lady Bevere face to face. She caught sight of the despair on his, for he was off his guard. But off it, or on it, no one could fail to see that he was ill at ease. Some young men might have kept a smooth countenance through it all, for their friends and the world; Roger was sensitive to a degree, refined, thoughtful, and could not hide the signs of conflict.

"What is it that is amiss with him, Johnny?" Lady Bevere said, coming to me as I stood on the hearth-rug before the fire, Tottams having disappeared with Harriet. "He looks wretchedly ill; *ill with care*, as it seems to me; and he cannot eat."

What could I answer? How was it possible, with those kind, candid blue-eyes, so like Roger's, looking confidingly into mine, to tell her that nothing was amiss?

"Dear Lady Bevere, do not be troubled," I said at length. "A little matter has been lately annoying Roger in London, and—and—I suppose he cannot forget it down here."

"Is it money trouble?" she asked.

"Not exactly. No; it's not money. Perhaps Roger will tell you himself. But please do not say anything to him unless he does."

"Why cannot you tell me, Johnny?"

Had Madam Lizzie been in the house, rendering discovery inevitable, I would have told her then, and so far spared Roger the pain. But she was not; she might not come; in which case perhaps the disclosure need not be made—or, at any rate might be staved off to a future time. Lady Bevere held my hands in hers.

"You know what this trouble is, Johnny; all about it?"

"Yes, that's true. But I cannot tell it you. I have no right to."

"I suppose you are right," she sighed. "But oh, my dear, you young people cannot know what such griefs are to a mother's heart; the dread they inflict, the cruel suspense they involve."

And the evening passed on to its close, and Lizzie had not come.

A little circumstance occurred that night, not much to relate, but not pleasant in itself. George, a good-looking young clergyman, got in very late and half-frozen—close upon eleven o'clock. He would not have supper brought back, but said he should be glad of some hot brandy-and-water. The water was brought in and put with the brandy on a side table. George mixed a glass for himself, and Roger went and mixed one. By-and-bye, when Roger had disposed of that, he went back to mix a second. Mr. Brandon glided up behind him.

"No, Roger, not in your mother's house," he whispered, interposing a hand of authority between Roger and the brandy. "Though you may drink to an unseemly extent in town, you shall not here."

"Roger got some brandy-and-water from mamma this afternoon," volunteered Miss Tottams, dancing up to them. She had been allowed to sit up to help dress the rooms; and, of all little pitchers, she had the sharpest ears. "He said he felt sick, Uncle John."

They came back to the fire and sat down again, Roger looking in truth sick; sick almost unto death.

Mr. Brandon went up to bed; Lady Bevere soon followed, and we began the rooms, Harriet and Jacob coming in to help. Roger exclaimed at the splendid heaps of holly. Of late years he had seen only the poor scraps they get in London.

"A merry Christmas to you, Roger!"

"Don't, Johnny! Better that you should wish me dead."

The bright sun was shining into his room as I entered it on this

Christmas morning: Roger stood brushing his hair at the glass. He looked very ill.

"How can I look otherwise?" retorted poor Roger. "Two nights and not a wink of sleep!—nothing but fever and apprehension and intolerable restlessness. And you come wishing me a merry Christmas!"

Well, of course it did sound like a mockery. "I will wish you a happier one for next year then, Roger. Things may be brighter then."

"How can they be?—with that dreadful weight that I must carry about with me for life? Do you see this?"—sweeping his hand round towards the window.

I saw nothing but the blessed sunlight—and said so.

"That's it," he answered: "that blessed sunlight will bring her here betimes. With a good blinding snowfall, or a pelting downpour of cats and dogs, I might have hoped for a respite. What a Christmas offering for my mother! I say!—don't go away for a minute—did you hear Uncle John last night about the brandy?"

I nodded.

"It is not that I *like* drink, or care for it for drinking's sake; I declare it to you, Johnny Ludlow; but I take it, and must take it, to drown care. With that extra glass last night, I might have got to sleep—I don't know. Were my mind at ease, I should be as sober as you are."

"But don't you see, Roger, that unless you pull up now, while you *can*, you may not be able to do it later."

"Oh, yes, I see it all," he carelessly said. "Well, it no longer matters much what becomes of me. There's the breakfast-bell. You can go on, Johnny."

The rooms looked like green bowers, for we had not spared either our pains or the holly-branches, and it would have been as happy a Christmas Day as it was a bright one, but for the sword that was hanging over Roger Bevere's head. Neither he nor I could enjoy it. He declined to go to church with us, saying he felt ill: the truth being that he feared to meet Lizzie. Not to attend divine service on Christmas Day was regarded by Mr. Brandon as one of the cardinal sins. To my surprise he did not remonstrate with Roger in words: but he looked the more.

Lady Bevere's dinner hour on Christmas Day was four o'clock, which gave a good long evening. Roger ate some turkey and some plum-pudding, mechanically; his ears were listening for the dreaded sound of the door-bell. We were about half-way through dinner, when there came a peal that shook the house. Lady Bevere started in her chair. I fancy Roger went nearly out of his.

"Why, who can be coming here now—with such a ring as that?" she exclaimed.

"Perhaps it is Harriet's sister!" cried the little girl, in her sharp, quick way. "Do you think it is, Harriet?"

"She's free enough for it," returned Harriet, in a vexed tone. "I

told her she might come yesterday, Miss Tottams, my lady permitting it, but I did not tell her she might come to-day."

I glanced at Roger. His knife and fork shook in his hands; his face wore the hue of the grave. I was little less agitated than he.

Another respite. It was only a parcel from the railway station, which had been delayed in the delivery. And the dinner went on.

And the evening went on too, as the past one went on—undisturbed. Later, when some of us were playing at snap-dragon in the little breakfast-room, Harriet came in to march Miss Tottams off to bed.

"Your sister did not come after all, did she, Harriet?" said Mary.

"No, Miss Mary. She's gone back to London," continued Harriet, after a pause. "Not enough life for her, I daresay, down here."

Roger glanced round. He did not dare ask whether Harriet knew she was gone back, or only supposed it.

Mary laughed. "Fond of life, is she?"

"She always was, Miss Mary. She is married to a gentleman. At least, that is her account of him: he is a medical man, she says. But it may be he is only a medical man's assistant."

"Did she go back yesterday, or to-day?" I enquired, carelessly. "She would have a cold journey."

"Yesterday, if she's gone at all, sir," replied Harriet: "she'd hardly travel on Christmas Day. If not, she'll be here to-morrow."

Roger groaned—and turned it off with a desperate cough, as though the raisins burnt his throat.

III.

The next day came, Wednesday, again clear, cold, and bright. At breakfast George and Mary agreed to walk to Brighton. "You will come too," said George, looking at us.

I said nothing. Roger shook his head. Of all places in the known world he'd not have ventured into Brighton, and run the risk of meeting *her*, perambulating its streets.

"No!—why it will be a glorious walk," remonstrated George.

"Don't care for it this morning," shortly answered Roger. "I'm sure Johnny doesn't."

Mr. Brandon came, if I may so put it, to the rescue. "I shall take a walk myself, and you two may go with me," said he to us. "I should like to see what the country looks like yonder"—pointing to the unknown regions beyond the little church. And as this was just in the opposite direction to Brighton, Roger made no objection, and we set off soon after breakfast. The sky overhead was blue and clear, the snow on the ground dazzlingly white.

The regions beyond the church were the same as these: a long-stretched-out moor of flat dreariness. Mr. Brandon walked on. "We shall come to something or other in time," said he. Walking with him meant walking when he was in the mood for it.

A mile or two onwards, more or less, a small settlement loomed into view, with a pound and a set of rusty stocks, and an old-fashioned inn, its swinging sign, The Rising Sun, as splendid as that other sign nearer Prior's Glebe: and it really appeared to us as if all the inhabitants had turned out to congregate round the inn-door.

"What's to do, I wonder?" cried Mr. Brandon: "seems to be some excitement going on." When near enough he enquired whether anything was amiss, and the whole throng answered together.

A woman had been found that morning frozen to death in the snow, and had been carried into The Rising Sun. A young woman wearing smart clothes, added a labourer, as the rest of the voices died away: got benighted, perhaps, poor thing, and lost her way, and so lay down to die; seemed to have been dead quite a day or two, if not more. The missis at The Sheaf o' Corn yonder had been over, and recognised her as having called in there on Sunday night and had some drink.

Why, as the man spoke, should the dread thought have flashed into my mind—was it Lizzie? Why should it have flashed simultaneously into Roger's? Had Lizzie lost her way that past Sunday night—and sunk down into some sheltered nook to rest awhile, and so sleep and then death overtook her? Roger glanced at me with frightened eyes, a dawn of horror rising to his countenance.

"I will just step in and take a look at her," I said, and bore on steadily for the door of the inn, deaf for once to Mr. Brandon's authoritative call. What did I want looking at dead women, he asked: was the sight so pleasant? No, it was not pleasant, I could have answered him, and I'd rather have gone a mile away from it; but I went in for Roger's sake.

The innkeeper—an elderly man, with a bald head and red nose—came forward, grumbling that for the past hour or two it had been sharp work to keep out the crowd, all agape to see the woman. I asked him to let me see her, assuring him it was not out of idle curiosity that I wished it. Believing me, he acquiesced at once; civilly remarking, as he led the way through the house, that he had sent for the police and expected them every minute.

On the long table of a bleak-looking outer kitchen, probably used only in summer, lay the dead. I took my look at her.

Yes, it was Lizzie. Looking as peaceful as though she had only just gone to sleep. Poor thing!

"Do you recognise her, sir? Did you think you might?"

I shook my head in answer. It would not have done to acknowledge it. Thanking him, I went out to Roger. Mr. Brandon fired off a tirade of reproaches at me, and said he was glad to see I had turned white.

"*Yes*," I emphatically whispered to Roger in the midst of it. "Go you in, and satisfy yourself."

Roger disappeared inside the inn. Mr. Brandon was so indignant at the pair of us, that he set off at a sharp pace for home again, I with him, Roger presently catching us up. Twice during the walk, Roger was taken with a shivering fit, as though sickening for the ague. Mr. Brandon held his tongue then, and recommended him, when we got in, to put himself between some hot blankets.

In the dead woman's pocket was found Harriet Field's address; and a policeman presented himself at Prior's Glebe with the news of the calamity and to ask what Harriet knew of her. Away went Harriet to The Rising Sun, and recognised the dead. It was her sister, she said; she had called to see her on Sunday night, having walked over from Brighton, and must have lost her way on the waste land in returning. What name, was the next question put; and, after a moment's hesitation, Harriet answered "Elizabeth Field." Not feeling altogether sure of the marriage, she said nothing about it.

Will you accuse Roger Bevere of cowardice for holding aloof; for keeping silence? Then you must accuse me for sanctioning it. He *could* not bring himself to avow all the past shame to his mother. And what end would it answer now if he did?—what good effect to his poor, wretched, foolish wife? None.

"Johnny," he said to me, with a grasp of his fevered hand, "is it wrong to feel as if a great mercy had been vouchsafed me?—is it *wicked?* Heaven knows, I pity her fate; I would have saved her from it if I could. Just as I'd have kept her from her evil ways, and tried to be a good husband to her—but she would not let me."

They held an inquest upon her next day: or, as the local phraseology of the place put it, "Sat upon the body of Elizabeth Field." The landlady of The Sheaf o' Corn was an important witness.

She testified that the young woman came knocking at the closed door of the inn on the Sunday evening during church time, saying she had lost her way. Nobody was at home but herself and the servant girl, her husband having gone to church. They let her in. She called for a good drop of drink—brandy-and-water—while sitting there, and was allowed to have it, though it was out of serving hours, as she declared she was perishing with cold. Before eight o'clock, she left, and was away about half-an-hour. Then she came back again, had more to drink, and bought a pint bottle of brandy, to carry, as she told them, home to her lodgings, and she got the girl to draw the cork, saying her rooms did not possess a corkscrew. She took the bottle away with her. Was she tipsy? interposed the coroner at this juncture. Not very, the witness replied, not so tipsy but that she could walk and talk, but she had had quite enough. She went away, and they saw her no more.

Harriet's evidence, next given, did not amount to much. The deceased, her younger sister, had lived for some years in London, but she did not know at what address latterly; she used to serve at a re-

freshment bar, but had left it. Until the past Sunday night, when Lizzie called unexpectedly at Prior's Glebe, they had not met for five or six years: it was then arranged that Lizzie should come to drink tea with her the next afternoon: but she never came. Felt convinced that the death was pure accident, through her having lost her way in the snow.

With this opinion the room agreed. Instead of taking the direct path to Brighton, as Harriet had enjoined, she must have turned back to The Sheaf o' Corn for more drink. And that she had wandered in a wrong direction, upon quitting it, across the waste land, there could not be any doubt; or that she had sat down, or *fallen* down, possibly from fatigue, in the drift where she was found. The brandy bottle lay near her, *empty*. Whether she died of the brandy, or of the exposure to the cold night, might be a question. The jury decided that it was the latter.

And nothing whatever had come out touching Roger.

Harriet had already given orders for a decent funeral, in the neighbouring grave yard. It took place on the afternoon of the following day, Friday. By a curious little coincidence, George Bevere was asked to take the service, the incumbent being ill with a cold. It afforded a pretext for Roger's attending. He and I walked quietly up in the wake of George, and stood at the grave together. Harriet thanked us for it afterwards: she looked upon it as a compliment paid to herself.

"Scott shall forward to her every expense she has been put to as soon as I am back in London," said Roger to me. "He will know how to manage it."

"Shall you tell Mrs. Dyke?"

"To be sure I shall. She is a trustworthy, good woman."

Our time at Prior's Glebe was up, and we took our departure from it on the Saturday morning; another day of intense cold, of dark blue skies, and of bright sunshine. George left with us.

"My dear, you will try—you will *try* to keep straight, won't you; to be what you ought to be," whispered Lady Bevere in the bustle of starting, as she clasped Roger's hands in the hall, tears falling from her eyes: all just as it was that other time in Gibraltar Terrace. "For my sake, dear; for my sake."

"I shall do now, mother," he whispered back, meeting her gaze through his wet eyelashes, his manner strangely solemn. "God has been very good to me, and I—I will try from henceforth to do my best in all ways."

And Roger has kept his word.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S.
Author of "Through Holland," "The Cruise of the Reserve Squadron," &c.

Jacob's Ladder.

WE left Jersey on the loveliest of mornings. The month was October, it might have been June. No June day ever saw a sea more tranquil. The little Weymouth boat was motionless almost as a painted ship upon a painted ocean. No one attempted even to affect illness, except the lady with the terrible trunk, and her indisposition was the result of agitation, not mal-de-mer.

We rounded the Jersey coast; noted all the headlands, rocks and bays; looked again upon the shores we had walked, the cliffs we had climbed, the heights we had scaled. Then, for us, Jersey passed away as a tale that is told; it remained as a dream in the memory; a very pleasant dream, all sunshine, blue skies, pure breezes, the murmur of a sea that flashed all the colours of the rainbow, made Fairyland a reality, and created a wonder as to what beautiful object would take its place in the far-off country, where we are told there shall be no more sea.

As Jersey melted away, a pale mist rose out of the water, and the mariners steered by their compass only. Guernsey remained invisible until we were close upon it. Then white cliffs, phantom-like, appeared; and Fort George, crowning a dizzy height; and presently the stone piers, meeting like strong arms that would shelter all within the fine harbour; keep all in safety from outside tempest; give refuge on dark nights when "stormy winds do blow," and many find their last rest only in a death which makes death twice lonesome: more lonely still that long journey each one has to take single-hand and solitary beyond the mysterious boundary that separates eternity from time.

So we entered the harbour. The vessel discharged her freight for Guernsey, of which we formed a portion, and we rejoiced that we were not going with her on to Weymouth.

St. Peter Port is the chief town of Guernsey. Perhaps it would be more correct to say it is the only town. Approached from the sea it stands out very picturesquely. Houses rise to a considerable height on the slopes. The quay is also lined with buildings, so far down that they are almost lost in the distance of St. Sampson's parish. The different districts of Guernsey are all called "parishes." A steam tramway runs along the quay from St. Peter Port to St. Sampson's, the only evidence of steam in the island: for Guernsey, unlike Jersey, has no railways. A good deal of shipping enlivens the quay, and trumpets forth the industry and importance of this seaport island. The harbour itself, on the other hand, is often almost empty, excepting when the steamers call on their passage to and fro, or when the smaller steamers that ply between the neighbouring islands, Sark, Alderney, &c., are lying at anchor until the day comes and the hour strikes for their next trip. The harbour, consequently, often possesses a sort of dignified holiday repose and appearance, as if it were there for the pleasures not the work of life; les beaux jours de la vie, which come too seldom and are gone too soon. But the quays of St. Sampson are given over to labour and toil: the unromantic work of unloading coal, the harder work of shipping stone and sending it forth into the world.

For there are quarries in Guernsey: and one of them, I especially remember, seemed worked by a race of idiots. Men and boys spoke no language we understood, and possibly returned us the compliment. They could tell us nothing about their work; appeared incapable of comprehending the most dramatically significant signs; could not inform us how to enter the quarry; and when we at length managed to get in by a series of labyrinthine twists and turnings, were quite unable to tell us how to get out again. It gave us a depressing view of the intellect of Guernsey quarrymen. Our driver, however, saw the matter in a different light. He had surveyed our difficulties from a distance, and gave vent to his opinions in language that to us was not more intelligible than that of the quarrymen. But strong waters betray themselves by their perfume, and by some such subtle process we knew that the strong words of this unknown tongue was not calling down blessings on the heads of these hewers and chippers of stone.

"Hard as the stone on which they work, so dense their brains," he said to us, reflectively, philosophically, epigrammatically, and he whipped up his horse with a shrug of his shoulders more condemning than words.

We had been strongly recommended to Old Government House Hotel. Blessings on the heads of those who did so. Never was hotel more comfortable. It was conducted on the footing of a private house, rather than anything else, and there one felt at home. Mr.

Gardner, our host, was everything that was kind, liberal, and attentive. We immediately found ourselves in a more congenial social atmosphere than anything vouchsafed to us by Jersey. True, at the table d'hôte there was no amusement to be obtained from eccentric forms, customs and conversation, as in the former island. The convenances were, indeed, strictly attended to, and the table had quite the tone, flavour and appearance of a select dinner party.

How Mr. Gardner, with his moderate charges, contrived to make his hotel remunerative, I hardly know. For things—that is to say all sorts of provisions—are dear in Guernsey. No one must go there for economising purposes. One lady, a recent arrival, said she was as much surprised as disappointed in this respect. She had expected to find things cheap in Guernsey, and they were dearer than in England. Butter—to descend to domestic details—was half-a-crown a pound; meat and everything else in proportion. House rent alone was reasonable, but a suitable house in a desired aspect formed a combination not always to be found.

If making a long stay in Guernsey, I should certainly come to an arrangement with the landlord of Old Government House. If he would not accept my terms, I should take his. The house is quiet and well ordered. It is enclosed and pleasantly retired, though in the heart of the town and a minute's walk from the Post Office and the principal shops. Nothing of all this is visible. They might be a mile away. A high wall shuts you in, shuts out all noise. There is a delicious lawn before the house with two curious trees at the end. You may sit there and command a fine view of the harbour, watch the steamers come in and depart, load and unload. You may study the signals and learn them by heart, and so get to know what boats are in sight, whence they come and whither away. The garden is well kept; the flowers are blooming and scent the air; though the month is October, geraniums and roses are trained upon the walls. You feel that in Guernsey your lines could not be cast in pleasanter places.

But all this we found out afterwards, and by degrees. The day we first landed was given up to many wonderments and speculations. The hotel porter, who was on the quay, took charge of our luggage, whilst we packed into a sort of expanded Bath chair; a low, one-horse carriage, about a foot from the ground, with just room enough for two. With evident anxiety H. left his beloved cabbage-stalks behind him, "to be forwarded" at the leisure and pleasure of the porter; whilst I inwardly hoped "something would happen" before we again had the felicity of beholding our baggage. However, nothing did happen; they remained then, as now, in possession of their respective owners. H., I believe, has hung his outside a small country den of his own, like a barber's pole; the other reposes in all the dignity of strict seclusion. It has retired from the world.

This quarto edition of a Bath chair went briskly on its way up the pier, crossed the esplanade, and mounted a steep hill no doubt lead-

ing towards the hotel. It was a picturesque bit of hill and gave one a favourable first impression of Guernsey. On the right a few houses were perched on steep slopes, in a foreign-looking fashion one does not often see in England. If one did, I suppose it would cease to be foreign-looking and would lose its charm. A little higher up we came to hanging gardens, still on the right. Trailing creepers, flowers and festoons, green arches that grew over trellis-work; long sprays of flowers that gracefully twined in and out of long sprays of green leaves, like voices blending in a duet. We had seen nothing so refined and luxuriant in Jersey, though many lovely things no doubt exist there that for want of time and opportunity we missed. "The Hanging Gardens of the Hesperides," suggested H., and really it did very well. Still higher, this time on the left, we came to a small public garden, tastefully laid out; and thus in our short drive it seemed to us that Guernsey was a Land of Promise.

Yet in respect of cultivation and fertility, taken as a whole, it is not equal to Jersey. Every foot of that pleasant little island is made to work for its living; about two-thirds of Guernsey are cultivated, and the barren third is a large slice in so small a territory. Unfortunately, the fine weather had not followed us, and almost from the first we saw Guernsey under cloudy skies. This was a great drawback, but it was not all: the cloudy skies were too often rainy also, gentle breezes became gales, warm days grew cold.

Our very first drive that very first afternoon was anything but a success. We made the circuit of Fort George, and visited one or two fine headlands, but the country we passed through looked bleak and desolate. The skies had turned grey, a sharp wind blew vigorously. We had left Jersey that morning in June weather; this afternoon it might be December. Towards the end of the drive, a thick, wet vapour, not uncommon to Guernsey, shut out all surrounding objects and chilled us to the bone. We had passed over roads not so well kept as in Jersey, between low loose walls that did duty for hedges, and bounded fields that looked like waste places in a desert. The drive inclined one to melancholy. However, it was only a first impression. The day came when the more we saw of Guernsey, the more we liked it.

Thus, from the first we saw Guernsey under less happy circumstances than attended us in Jersey. The charm of weather had departed. Only one day during our stay did an excursion car run, and then we fell in with it accidentally, and felt quite envious as it dashed past us, and quickly left our one-horse vehicle far behind. It certainly looked everything that could be desired, eclipsed the Jersey car in many ways, and especially in the matter of its horses, which were really splendid animals. Our perigrinations, taken in the ordinary carriages, were not half so pleasant and exhilarating.

On the other hand you have not the same amount of country and overlook; nor the high hedges of Jersey to look over; nor the cabbage-stalks to command. The latter are much more cultivated in

Jersey: and those whose ambition is to possess such remembrances of the Channel Islands, had best lay in their store at St. Helier's.

One of the first things to strike you in Guernsey, is, that though there is no Tower of Babel, there is a confusion of tongues. Or perhaps it would be better to say a confusion of country. English and French are so blended together that you grow bewildered and begin to wonder where you are. The very names of the streets are written up in both languages. English money is taken and French money is always given you in change. Thus you have a variety of coins which only adds to your perplexity. Shillings and francs get hopelessly mixed, and you give the one for the other twenty times a day.

The town of St. Peter Port is rather quaint and curious, with sundry old-fashioned houses which seem to pride themselves on their antiquity as the old families of Guernsey do on their pedigree. There are "Sixties" and "Forties" in the society of Guernsey, and I have been assured that when a Forty enters a room in which a Sixty is seated, the Sixty immediately rises, makes her curtsey and departs, leaving the Forty in possession. What happens in the contrary case, I do not know. This certainly sounds somewhat extreme and far-fetched. In days gone by, when people were exclusive to the point of ill-breeding, one can imagine such a state of existence; but those days have departed with their lights; and in this levelling epoch, perhaps the danger is of going too far the other way. The "inheritors" of Guernsey have no doubt too much good sense to follow out the above statement to the letter. And yet the inhabitants of a small island do become almost of necessity more cramped and narrow-minded in their views of life than those who, moving in the greater world, have their minds expanded (sometimes to an undesirable extent) by a wider experience.

St. Peter Port is smaller than St. Helier's. It is more hilly and appears to have been built with greater regard to method. The old portion of the town is more picturesque and interesting than the new. Long flights of steps that may be called Jacob's Ladders, lead up from the port to the High Street, narrow passages supported on either side by the houses. The parish church is by far the finest church in all the islands, and with its stone pillars and arches has almost the dignity of a small cathedral. We used to steal in here at night sometimes when practising was going on, and listen to the voices and the organ as they went rolling and echoing out into the darkness, sorry enough when it was over, and the singers dispersed, and the organ doors were put to and shut in all the harmony, and the little light was extinguished and left all in darkness. Just above the church is the new market hall, a handsome, covered-in building, with a grand flight of steps, and a good display of everything that is grown under the sun: delicious fruit, vegetables and flowers, fish, flesh, fowl, and good red herring.

In the matter of shops it is very much behind St. Helier's, but to

those who keep the shops, too much praise cannot be given. Politeness and civility are their passwords. Whether you invest a hundred pence or a hundred pounds you are treated with a certain deference and dignity at once flattering to your self-respect and establishing a feeling of goodwill towards those who thus dispense their wares to the public. The description given of the shop-keepers of Scotland might be applied to those of Guernsey: "They all seem in their own particular way to be ladies and gentlemen."

But the Guernsey people have a softness and gentleness of manner the stronger temperaments of the north have not thought it necessary to cultivate. They are very confiding, too, and if you, an utter

ST. PETER PORT.

stranger, enter a shop without money, it is not of the least consequence. They will trust you to an unlimited extent. This, at least, was our experience. It may be that the people of Guernsey are born physiognomists—that rare gift—in which case the confidence we inspired was, to us, at any rate, sufficiently intelligible; but I quite think it arose simply out of their exalted opinion of mankind in general. It was, however, a kindly trait that led one into expense, if not extravagance. A feeling that such qualities deserved encouragement and recognition tempted one far beyond "first intentions," and sometimes refuge was found only in a precipitate and humiliating flight.

Yet in the shape of curiosities and antiquities I do not know that there was anything very startling either to cause you to break the tenth commandment or to draw rash cheques upon your banker. It is a very bad system, by the way, this drawing cheques upon one's

banker. After a time one loses a just conception of the value of money. It is so easy to write out a cheque for a hundred pounds for — say a Sévres vase. The vase is so beautiful; the slip of paper constituting the cheque so little and so trifling; it is so easily drawn. You do not hesitate, or hesitate only for a moment; the exchange is made, the bargain concluded. But if you had to hand over a hundred sovereigns in hard, golden coin in exchange for the vase, depend upon it, more often than not, you would never give yourself even the chance or danger of hesitation; the bargain would never be made. A just value of the money would be realised.

There was little of this sort of thing to tempt us in St. Peter Port. Yet in one house we saw sufficient to satisfy the most inveterate lover of the ancient and the curious, but the objects were not for sale. This was the house of Victor Hugo. The exterior is ugly and ordinary enough, but passing through the doorway, you find yourself at once in a new world. All trace of the modern has disappeared; nothing but the old, sometimes the very old, the quaint, the curious and eccentric is visible. The house, as a habitation, would be depressing; for a passing visit it is excessively interesting; for a week's visit in the palmy days of its master it must have been enchanting. Gloomy staircases are draped with old carpet and tapestry, and encourage a slight feeling of suffocation as you pass upwards. No wonder that Victor Hugo himself made of his study the garret of the house, where a skylight, furnished and arranged to suit his own peculiar taste, let in the light of heaven, and glass doors admitted the fresh breezes, whilst they enabled him to pass out to the flat leads There he might ruminate, if in the mood, or gaze out upon the gardens and fields at his feet, the town beneath him, the fair sea beyond.

Some of the rooms are fitted up with quaint Dutch tiles and curious old pottery and porcelain; other rooms are heavy with oak panelling and old oak furniture, and are almost funereal. Ancient, worm-eaten oaken doors shut in the rooms and close ponderously. One room contains a large, ancient, four-post bedstead, in which no one has slept since it was there installed. It is a double room, full of quaintly-carved oak, and was fitted up expressly for Garibaldi. He never went there, and so the bed has remained untenanted. Altogether, it is certainly the house of a man of genius, though not without that eccentricity which is sometimes said to accompany the exceptional gift.

Victor Hugo now seldom visits Guernsey; has not visited it for some years: the house is closed, but on certain days is opened to visitors. The silence and gloom were depressing; and as the old housekeeper threw back the shutters for us and admitted light upon the darkness, it somehow seemed to read one a sombre lesson on the shortness of life itself. These rooms, closed, as it were for ever, had lately sparkled with life and light and animation; walls

had echoed with the words of vigorous intellect, flashing wit, gay humour; the love and laughter of youth. All this had passed away, and ghosts lurked in their places, in every corner and crevice of the old house.

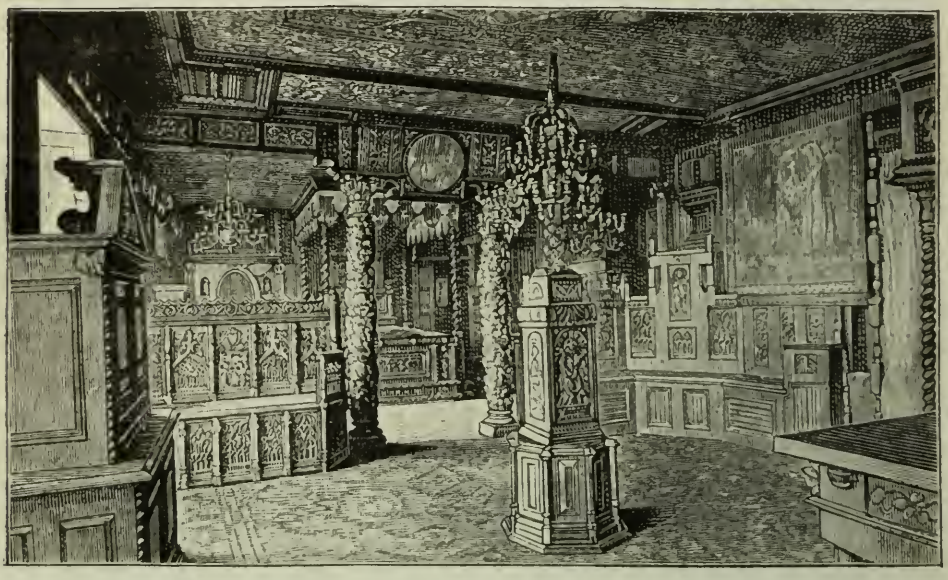
The prettiest and most luxuriant parts of Guernsey seem to lie round about the town itself. Here, by degrees, you discover valleys and green slopes and fair lawns and exquisite flower-gardens. Many houses are well placed within the shelter and seclusion of their own grounds, and form what might be called estates in miniature. Here and there you come upon a row of quite fine trees, refreshing after the barrenness in this respect of Jersey. One or two of the gardens are open to public inspection, and are worthy a visit. Their immense conservatories contain rare plants, flowers, and ferns; and luscious grapes hang from above in all the tempting beauty of their purple bloom.

Ferns are one of the charms of Guernsey, as you presently find out. They grow in the water-lanes, adorn the banks, and lurk in the crevices of the rocks. A goodly collection of these might easily be made, but for the difficulty of arranging them, keeping them, transporting them beyond the Channel. Some people have a natural aptitude for making light of such troubles. They overcome them with the greatest ease. To us, we humbly confess them insurmountable. We are one of those who would rather govern a kingdom than tie up a parcel. In these days could a more emphatic assertion be made?

The water-lanes are one of the chief features in the scenery of Guernsey. Imagine a rugged, picturesque lane, leading to the shore. In the centre is a running stream, and the water purls down with a rippling sound suggestive of music, and laughter, and Undine. It twists about in its course, like a snake. The bed is shallow, and the stones are smooth and polished. Ferns grow in abundance, and charm the eye with their fresh green beauty and grace. Many people, no doubt, could no more pass them than neglect a diamond lying upon the road. The hedges add much to the beauty and rustic effect of the water-lanes—where hedges are: sometimes the lanes are bounded only by unromantic stone walls. In summer-time these lanes must possess a great charm, but in winter they are somewhat difficult to navigate. They get muddy, and you stick in the mud; sometimes with both feet; and you feel as if you had been suddenly attacked with locked-jaw in the wrong place. A lady will all at once find that she has lost one of her galoshes, and looking back will see it about ten yards up, comfortably reposing in a species of dry dock, a cradle of mud. Possession is regained at great risk, the sacrifice of a pretty boot, the gratifying display of a small foot.

Then a water-lane will suddenly terminate in a broad view of the cliffs and the splendid sea. You stand upon the breezy height and drink in the pure air. Mind and body seem to expand under the influence. The gorse under your feet is soft to the tread; the brilliant sea, with all its colours, lies below and stretches far away.

Perhaps you see Sark, rising like a dream-island out of the water. If you know the island, it suggests an ocean pearl, an earthly paradise; if you do not know it, you are greatly to be pitied. The little islands of Herm and Jethou lie near it, rather less than half way across. Most people know very little of these islands, and some people have never even heard of them. If you visit them, you must be careful to carry with you a store of provisions sufficient for the time of your sojourn. Nature has certainly provided refreshment in the shape of blackberries—in their season; but man has not followed this good example; and blackberries, though they make delicious jam and jelly, and excellent home-made wine, are slender support as a sole article of food.



GARIBALDI'S ROOM.

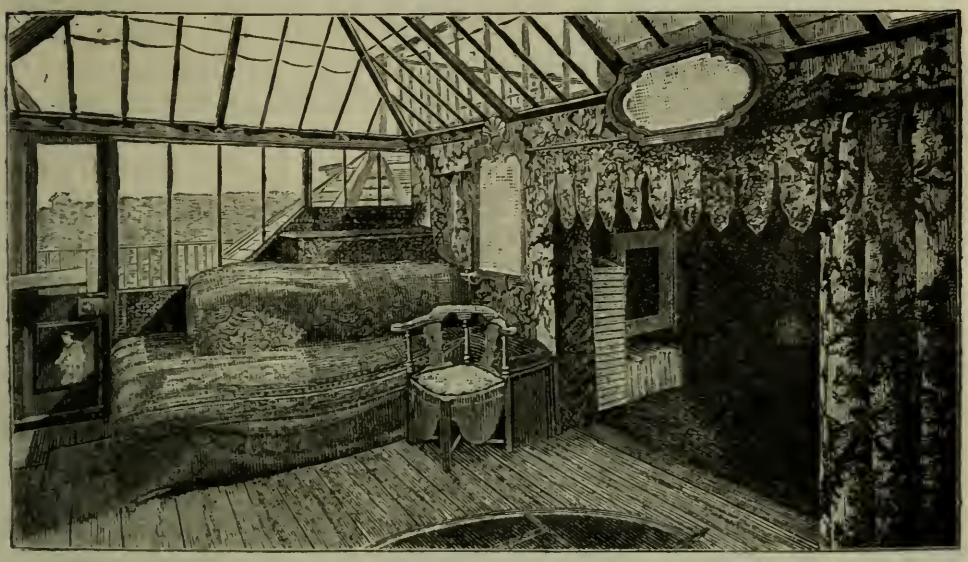
The coast and cliffs of Guernsey—as of Jersey—are its great beauty and attraction, and many of the drives are merely a means to an end—a display of grand rocks washed by the exquisite sea. One drive led us past a small church and churchyard, in which, said the driver, was an inscription upon a tomb that few people could read. It might be Greek or Latin, but, whatever it was, no one could decipher it. The history was a sad one. The lady buried beneath had, some years ago, while at a picnic, wandered too near the cliffs, fallen over, and lost her life. We were curious to see the epitaph that none could read, and were surprised to find it plain English, though the characters were so illegible that the difficulty of making them out stamped the words in the memory. They were as follows:

Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature whom I found so fair;
I trust she lives with Thee, and there
I find her worthier to be loved.

A sad epitaph, yet underlying it was all the beauty of devotion and faith and hope. I did not remember the verse in "In Memoriam," but felt sure it would there be found.

We continued our drive through lanes and roads, and a good deal of flat country, and deserted-looking fields, that probably in summer time, under blue skies, put on a beauty that to-day was missing. Presently we issued upon a broader stretch of land, forming the summit of a cliff. It was adorned with a small, grey, solitary house, with closed doors and shuttered windows, and an appearance melancholy in the extreme. This, said the driver, was Victor Hugo's Haunted House.

Whether he meant that the house was haunted and was the



VICTOR HUGO S STUDY.

enviable property of the great writer: or whether that the house, previously haunted, had become known to fame through the medium of the writer's pen: or whether that the writer had merely manufactured a ghost, and here bestowed upon it a local habitation and a name: this the driver could not explain. All he could say was, that this was Victor Hugo's Haunted House.

So we made the most of it, placed our own construction upon the matter; mentally conjured up and revelled in the most fearful apparition that ever escaped from Hades, or whatever other region ghosts are supposed to inhabit. The house had once been tenanted by a solitary human being; one of those daring men, no doubt, who set all laws, all nature, all society at defiance; but the ghost had evidently been too much for him. He disappeared suddenly one night during a thunder-storm. An affrighted, solitary wayfarer, crossing the moor, heard the church clock of L'Erée strike the awful hour of midnight. He looked at the house. The shutters were not closed. The

upstairs room was illumined by a blaze of blue light. A mysterious, unearthly-looking object, with horns and a tail, was seen cramming a struggling victim into a sack. This done, he tied it up securely with string, threw the burden over his back, and disappeared from mortal view.

It was a very thrilling and delicious story, clothed in the simple, straightforward language of the driver. He evidently believed in it as he believed in his own existence. In vain we rattled the door and tried the shutters; they would not move, and we had to content our curiosity with the mere outside of the grey and gloomy walls. Very possibly the interior was parched and black and singed; we even thought we smelt sulphur through the keyhole; but imagination will sometimes run away with us, and I should not like to affirm the latter conviction too strongly. As a faithful servant of twenty years' standing remarked some time ago in a court of justice, when requested to give positive evidence against a heartless wretch who had entered her pantry in broad daylight and made off with the plate-basket: "I am quite certain he's the man: but I won't swear to he."

One thing, at any rate, we could affirm—the fineness of the rocks just beyond the haunted house. They were high and bold, and shelved down to the sea with a precipitancy beyond our daring. Perhaps if we had had more time we might have found more courage. As it was, we contented ourselves with gazing into the depths, and looking down upon the plashing water that surged and broke and foamed and frothed at the foot of the rugged cliffs. Mushrooms grew in abundance, but we left them for other hands to gather.

We said good-bye to the cliffs and the ghost-haunted ground. The driver galloped over the smooth turf, and swept round by the coast. We gradually came down to sea level, and presently reached L'Erée, an inn where lunch was provided. The landlady was so civil, obliging and good-tempered, that I believe she would have roasted and served up herself for us, had we only been cannibals. But, as she truly observed, no one's resources were absolutely unlimited; and last night she had had a dance at her inn. About a hundred couples had taken advantage of the moonlight and come out from St. Peter Port. It was quite a frequent occurrence. They kept it up until one or two in the morning, and then went back to "town."

"But why," we asked innocently: "why come so far for a dance? Why not hire a room in the town and have it there, in a quiet, rational manner?"

"Oh, sir," cried the landlady, with an arch expression, "the moonlight—and the walk—and the pairing off into couples—think how much they would lose—the spirit and essence of the evening would be gone—youth and beauty, you know, sir."

We knew nothing: had no sympathy whatever in the matter. We

were even extremely shocked at such Bohemian indiscretions on the part of the youth and beauty of Guernsey; but perhaps that was because, as the landlady observed and her larder testified, the youth and beauty had eaten her out of house and home. However, we managed to satisfy the pangs of hunger. Something always comes to light at the moment of extremity; a fat capon overlooked, or a potted tongue in the depths of a cupboard, or ham and eggs: or even only bread and cheese and fresh butter. It is certain that before we left, that wonderful landlady had performed miracles quite equalling any conjurer's hat.

We took a roundabout way home. Now following the coast-line, watching the rolling up of the waves, wave succeeding wave, that broke and died out upon the shore with a soothing, surging sound that had in it nothing of melancholy or of the warning heard by little Paul. To us the sea is ever a companion of the happiest description. Whether its mood be the calmness of a lake or the fury of a tempest, we love it equally; feel ever in harmony with it; if we could choose our habitation would live and die within sound of its beat.

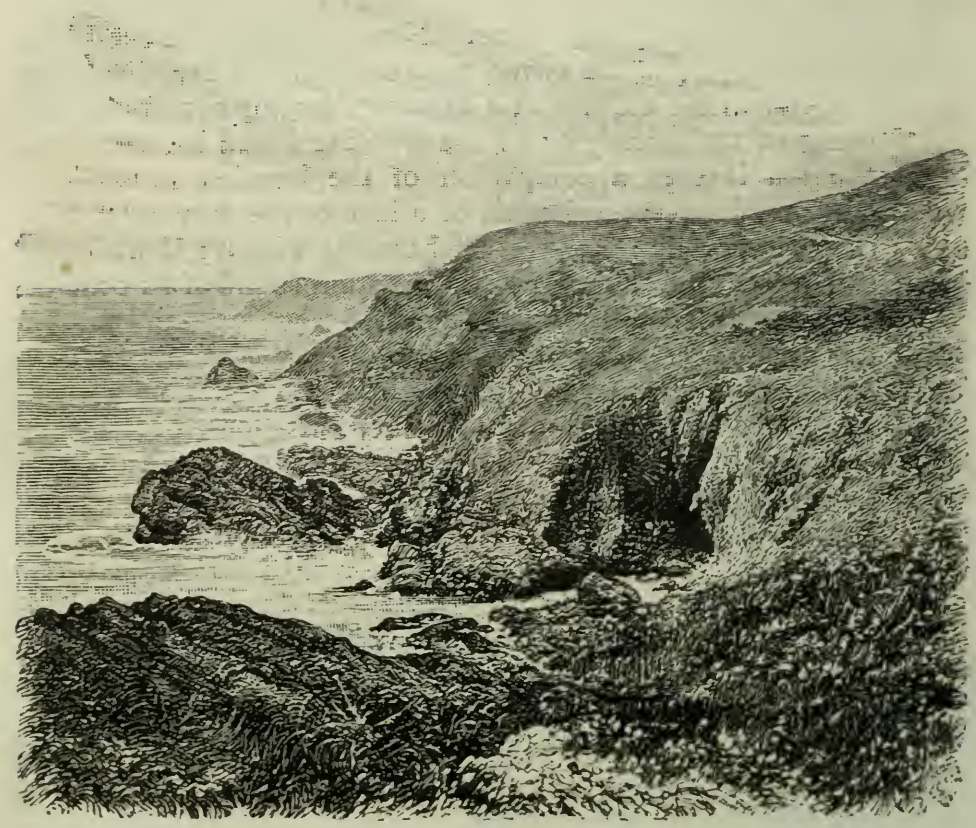
Again, we turned inland, between fields and stone walls and autumn hedges, passing every now and then a small cluster of houses, or a church, but for the most part meeting no one, and seeing no signs of life. The ground rose and fell in gentle undulations, occasionally reaching the dignity of a hill. Presently we came to the quarries worked by the men of the unknown tongue and unknown stupidity. Then onwards by St. Sampson's, which we approached in so glorious a sunset that it dwells in the memory for ever. It even threw a shadow of romance upon the old church, which dates back to 1111, and cannot boast even the beauty of antiquity or the dignity of age. Time as a rule bestows its own special charm, but the church of St. Sampson has gained only the ugliness of age. There is such a thing, after all; and it sometimes extends to mankind. Womankind is, or ought to be exempt: since they never pass the age of thirty-eight, theirs is the blessing of eternal youth.

But our pleasantest excursion was when we left St. Peter Port for two days and a night and went over to Gouffre. It required strength of mind to leave the comforts of Old Government House for a lonely inn that had gone into winter quarters and no longer expected to be called upon to entertain visitors. No one but an ardent lover of nature and sea and rocks could have done it. Even H. acquiesced in the idea with that passive look of mild surprise which is worse than remonstrance. We all know what these places are, when the season is over and they have shut up for the winter; when blinds are drawn, and fires have ceased to enliven the chimney corner, and a general sense of damp and decay hangs about the rooms and the passages.

However, the weather favoured us; and to visit Guernsey and not pass a night at the Gouffre was not to be thought of for an instant. We started early one bright morning, after breakfast. The carriage

passed up through the newer and less interesting portion of the town, swept round to the left through Forest Parish, with its quaint churchyard, and in due time turned into the narrow defile leading to the Gouffre Hotel, the grand rocks and the sea.

Arrived, we were received with a shock. The landlady, with stern, uncompromising expression, informed us that it was impossible to take us in. Four ladies were staying with her, and had exhausted her utmost resources. She hadn't so much as bread to offer us. It was utterly out of the question. We must return to St. Peter Port.



NEAR THE GOUFFRE.

It was a case demanding prompt measures, resolution. "J'y suis, j'y reste," said Dumas, and mentally we said the same. In the politest way possible, and with an air that would have bent a will of iron, we told the landlady that if it was impossible to remain, it was still more so to return. We sang the praises of the Gouffre, the reputation of her inn, the excellent report we had received of her amiability and powers of contrivance. Gradually the lines of her face softened; vanity, that universal touchstone to which the greatest as well as the weakest mind responds, was aroused; victory was ours.

"But when all is said and done, gentlemen," said the landlady, who was now a totally distinct and unrecognisable person from the one we had met ten minutes ago: "when all is said and done, you can-

not live without eating, and I positively have nothing in the house. Not an ounce of meat, not a loaf of bread, not a bottle of wine. The ladies who are with me have completely exhausted my larder; I have barely enough for their requirements to-day. To-morrow I must send in for fresh supplies, but to-day I have no one to do my commissions."

This difficulty we assured her was easily overcome. The coachman who had brought us should take a nóte back to Old Government House, and we should certainly be rescued from famine.

SAINTS' BAY; NEAR PETIT BOT BAY.

Upon which the good lady fairly lowered her colours, completely came over to the enemy, became our slave, and overwhelmed us with attentions. She could not do too much. A sitting-room was ready at once; bedrooms came down, apparently from the clouds, ready prepared; peace, comfort and harmony reigned. And all, thanks to Dumas' excellent motto.

Plenty reigned also. Our note was so powerfully worded, described so vividly the horrors of starvation, the contrast between the abundance of Old Government House and the desolation of the Gouffre, that in less than two hours, Mr. Gardner himself had driven over with a hamper that, in the largeness of his heart and under the delusion that our capacities for the duties of the table were un-

limited—though in no sense of the word were we sons of Anak—was stocked with a week's delicacies and provisions and a supply of choice wines.

We were out on the rocks by that time, did not see him, and had to keep our gratitude and our thanks until the evening of the next day. But when we returned to dinner at the Gouffre, we found a snow-white cloth, a well-set table groaning under the weight of roast chickens and delicious new bread and butter, and a further amount of luxuries too numerous to be detailed. More than ever we felt into what excellent hands we had fallen in Guernsey: our lines, as I have said, were cast in pleasant places.

Shall we ever forget that stay at the Gouffre? It was the height of pleasure and happiness. The rock scenery was magnificent, and we had it all to ourselves. If there were ladies at the inn we saw them not, and—delicious experience—we heard no sound. All day long, each day, we were out on the rocks; winding round the coast; now high up above the sea, now down on the shore, at the very edge of the tide; now overlooking precipices or following narrow paths, where a false step would have hurled us in a moment into the unseen world; now descending the rough, steep, gorsey hill-side, which landed us in Petit Bot Bay, at the foot of the solitary house that overlooks the little break in the coast leading to the sea.

The owner of the house was cutting his hedges, and the prettiest little girl in the world was superintending her father's work with an air of great wisdom. He told me that, in summer-time, he let his rooms; and people, I think, must be glad enough to take them; must find the solitude and repose, the grandeur of the rocky coast, the beauty of the sea, a source of never-ending enjoyment. If, for a while, we want a retreat from life to brace up nerves and give the moral system strength to battle against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, a far better medicine this communion with all that is grand in nature, than the withdrawal into the four walls of a monastery, where the sole contemplation is the depressing study of human beings frail even as ourselves.

This Petit Bot Bay is one of the finest parts of Guernsey. The descent to it by road is really fine, the ascent up the valley on the other side is beautiful. There are slopes and stretches of heather large enough to give one a sense of grandeur. To-day the heather had changed to the tint of autumn, a rich brown of many shades. But we had come to the Gouffre specially for the rocks and the sea, and we kept to them very closely.

We came upon two old fishermen in our walks—luckily not far from the inn. Heavily-laden baskets weighed upon their shoulders, and we asked their contents. They put down the baskets and rested themselves on the slope of the cliff, and entered into conversation. Not a word of English spoke they; nothing but a French patois, not too remote however from the mother tongue, and easily under-

stood. It was a very picturesque scene, and the weather-beaten old men, with their grey locks flying in the wind, were in good keeping with it. We were at a considerable height above the sea. Just at this spot—La Moye Point—a tongue of almost detached rocks jutted out from the mainland, and the water dashed and broke around them. They helped to form a small harbour where fishing-boats were moored, and our old men pointed out their own little craft. *La Belle Marie*, I think it was called; and if so named in honour of the wife of one of the veterans, the fair days of the original Belle Marie must have existed in the long ago.

Then they turned to their baskets, and we found they had had the luck—late though the season—to capture a splendid lobster. Here indeed was manna in the wilderness—for we knew not then how plentifully our wants had been supplied. An exchange was suggested, and they demanded half-a-crown for the creature. It was black and lively, and moved its claws suggestively. The price seemed rather excessive for this remote district of the world, but they declared the bargain was all ours. So we paid them in full, and H. putting his stick to the lobster's claw, it immediately fastened on to it, and hung suspended therefrom until we reached the inn, and gave it over to the tender mercies of the landlady. That evening it graced our table, so fine a fish and so delicate a flavour that, with great magnanimity of mind, we confessed the bargain had not been all on the other side.

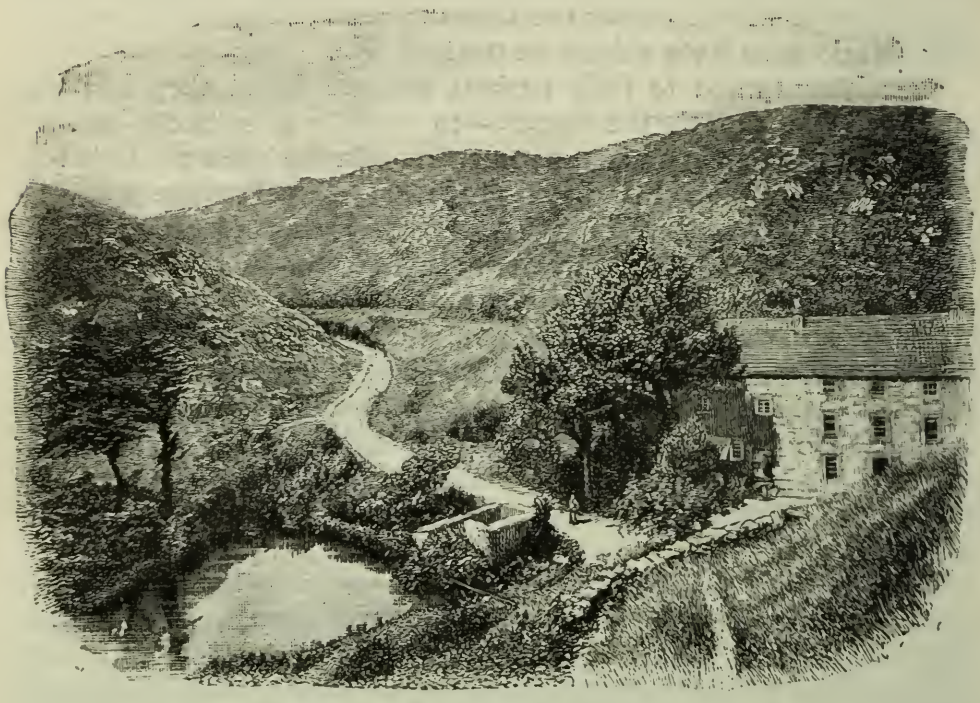
Every possible moment of the next day was given to the open air; to scrambling about the rocks; enjoying the winds that blew, the sea that plashed on the shore and sparkled in the sunlight. More and more we were in love with this grand spot; the broken, precipitous cliffs; the splendid points and headlands that we rounded only to come into view of others beyond, equally fine, equally alluring to the pedestrian. Every now and then the cliffs parted and sloped down into valleys or gorges that admitted you to the shore, whilst the rocks rose high on either hand. Streams here sometimes ran to the sea, and more than once we found ourselves fast falling into bogs that compelled a quick retreat.

But as a rule our walks were all beauty and excitement; the highest, healthiest kind of excitement, the purest, keenest pleasure. We had told our Jehu to return for us at nightfall, and how we found courage to go back with him, I have never known. We turned our backs upon everything that was beautiful; left a perfect legacy to our landlady's larder: and we would not for a moment suggest that this had anything to do with the fervency of her adieux, and the evidently heartfelt wish that, like the swallows, we should return to her in fair weather.

Her mode of settlement was peculiar, uncommon, and original. We asked for the bill, and she appeared in person. Certainly that would have been a heavier reckoning than we had bargained for.

"Well, sirs," she said, "I do not know what to charge. You have come to me under peculiar circumstances. Instead of my feeding you, you have fed me. My larder groans with good things. My son is away and I have no one to take counsel with. Suppose I say so and so? Do you think it too much? If so, I will accept whatever you consider right and fair."

Lives there the man who could have paid her one fraction less than her demand? Not they, at any rate, who stood before her. Well,



PETIT BOT VALLEY.

therefore, that her charges were reasonable, and she a woman true and just in her dealings.

Yes, we left behind us much that was lovely and of good report (I now refer to inanimate nature); rocks and cliffs and sea, and splendid walks that demanded weeks of wooing; but we also had before us much that equally attracted us. And one bright morning we chartered a fishing-boat, left the greater portion of our baggage in the safe keeping of Mr. Gardner, and set sail for Sark.

How we arrived there, or whether we arrived at all, or what became of us, or whether we ever returned: a reply to these questions, and a true and faithful account of what befel us, must form the subject of another paper.

FAREWELL.

LIKE wandering ghosts the wintry winds are roaming
Through shivering boughs—no star illumes the sky,
As side by side, we linger in the gloaming,
Hand clasping hand, though we have said Good-bye!
Cold on my bosom lies thy parting token—
Fast fall my tears, for I remember when
The fond good-bye in playful mood was spoken,
While hope kept whispering we should meet again.

With thee I shared the summer's golden pleasures:
Ah me, how gaily danced its hours away!
Bleeding and torn, my breaking heart still treasures
The tender memory of each vanished day—
Dear hours of rapture! gone beyond recalling,
Dead as the flowers we gathered in the past!
The night has come, our mingled sighs are falling
Like mournful requiems on the wailing blast.

Bend low, my dearest, e'er we part for ever,
Whisper once more that I am all thine own!
Touch with thy loving lips before we sever
The pallid cheek that glowed for thee alone
Ah love, remember, when thy life seems lonely,
When fortune's fickle blast blows wild and chill,
One faithful heart lives on thy memory only,
One constant bosom holds thine image still.

I feel thy fervent lips upon my tresses—
Love's tenderest phrases thou art murmuring now!
Thy trembling fingers raise with fond caresses
The wandering locks from off my aching brow!
O'er hill and dale the angry winds are sweeping,
As though to tear me from thy last embrace—
Nor dare these eyes, so vainly, wildly weeping
Take their last look of thy beloved face.

Farewell, farewell! Oh, love! can I be dreaming?
I call thy name and yet thou dost not stay!
Nor twinkling star, nor round white moon is beaming,
To light thee, dearest, on thy cheerless way.
Farewell, farewell—love, wrecked with mighty sorrow,
Wrings from the tortured heart that anguished cry;
Fierce winds will cease, dark clouds disperse to-morrow,
But suffering love bleeds on, and will not die!

FANNY FORRESTER.

PHILIP TWYFORD'S EXCHANGE.

"IT'S a bad job altogether, Philip."

"Somewhat unfortunate, I admit."

"You've been taken in."

"I was perhaps somewhat too credulous."

The old Squire fussed about between his leather easy-chair and the fireplace, clattered the fire-irons, stumbled over a foot-stool, and managed in the process to considerably deepen the hue of his ordinarily rubicund countenance.

Philip Twyford took matters more quietly. He twirled the ends of his moustache with his right hand, while the left reposed comfortably in his pocket. He was a fairly good-looking young man: such a one as you might meet any day in Bond Street, and perhaps look at twice. But that would depend upon the interest of your thoughts or conversation. He stood five feet ten high, had a good figure, and carried himself well. This last was only what was to be expected: it would have been a disgrace to his drill had it been otherwise.

"Well, I've helped you twice already," said the Squire. "Each time you had only yourself to thank for requiring it. I don't know that I shall do so again."

"I never expected it, sir. You can bear witness that I have not asked for help."

"Then what do you intend to do?"

"I have my pay," quietly retorted Philip, with an almost imperceptible drawing up of his figure.

"Your pay! A paltry six-and-sixpence a day! Do you imagine that you can live in conformity with your position as *my* nephew on your pay. Zounds! Boy! are you mad?"

"It isn't an enticing prospect, I know. Nobody, perhaps, knows better than myself. I who have watched those poor fellows, with wife and children, scraping and screwing in order to make a decent appearance. But there—it was just the sight of that that I couldn't stand, and it has been my ruin."

"Serve you right," roared the Squire; "trusting everything to a penniless sub-lieutenant because he imagines that he has a talent for speculation. And away it goes like a puff of smoke, into Egyptians or Russians, or some such rubbish."

"A railway," corrected Philip.

"Worse and worse," growled the old man, "infernal inventions of the age: cutting up the good hunting counties."

Philip sighed. He thought of his beautiful chestnut, the pride of the hunt, who was never known to refuse a jump or miss being in at

the death. His major would ride it now. Sold—sold—everything sold, to meet the liabilities of his friend.

"I won't stay in England, sir, to annoy you with the sight of my impecuniosity," he said. "I shall try for an exchange to India; perhaps get an adjutancy: and at any rate draw double pay."

"Mean-spirited lad. The Pytchley will miss you sadly. Philip," he continued, "listen to me. You're good-looking, you're popular, you're a society man. You must marry an heiress."

"I think I shall go now, sir," irrelevantly remarked Philip. "I've made a clean breast of it all, and I'm sorry to have disappointed you." The Squire appeared not to have heard.

"£70,000 pounds if a penny. Young, pretty, and coming to the hunt ball. Just the thing. Attend to me, sir. You admit that you are indebted to me for all you possess, or rather might have possessed?"

The young man bowed assent.

"Then follow my instructions. Be at the ball to-morrow night, and devote yourself—yes, devote yourself, I say, to the young lady whom I shall tell you of. Not a word, now, not a word."

"But really, sir. The idea is extremely distasteful. I don't feel ——"

"Bah!" thundered the Squire, "beggars can't be choosers. Now go, if you like."

About a week before the preceding conversation, two girls, attended by a middle-aged lady, of the sharp-featured, sombrely-dressed type, indicative of "Lady Companion," entered the costume room of Messrs. Harley and West's, in Regent Street.

There were lovely dresses on the stands. Fairy-like arrangements of billowy tulle or Indian gauze; rich silks and satins, falling in massive folds; and charming constructions in shots or satin marveilleux, to suite the more slender pockets.

"It really is too good of you, Lettie," almost whispered the younger of the two girls. "I never saw anything so sweet before."

She was a neat little woman, with a round, child-like face and soft grey eyes.

"Well, look about and choose," laughed her companion. "You seem dazzled by all the magnificence, but that will soon pass off."

The speaker was a strikingly handsome girl, evidently older by two or three years than her friend, and a great contrast. A blonde of exceptional perfection, with masses of soft silken hair crowning a face that was noticeable for its pure colouring even among beauties of her complexion. Stately and gloriously fair, she appeared taller than she really was.

An attendant approached her and bowed deferentially.

"I want something very pretty in ball dresses," she said carelessly. "Not too handsome: it is for a first ball; for my friend here. Jeannie, come and consult."

It was decided at the outset that it must be white. "Something shimmery," Jeannie had suggested.

Lettie waved aside all flimsy materials disdainfully. "Pretty," she admitted, "but I mean to give you something substantially useful, Jeannie."

Satin, the designer decided, was too old, but he could make up a lovely dress out of satin merveilleux. This met with the approval of both the girls.

"And now as to style, madam," he said, thoughtfully. "You would like something simple, yet fashionable, I presume."

He retired gravely to a desk behind a wooden screen, and covered his eyes with his hand in rapt consideration. A few inarticulate sounds escaped him: then he rose the inspired artist.

"It must be gold," he said gravely, "braid, I would recommend. It is youthful and well suited to the material."

He sent an assistant for the Paris model, while he proceeded to further explain his ideas. Jeannie was, of course, charmed. She had never imagined herself in such a costume.

"I must make some slight variations," continued the artist. "The model, you will perceive, is somewhat handsomer than I propose. Satin and gold embroidery."

"It is lovely!" gasped both girls in a breath.

"I *must* have one like it," exclaimed Lettie. "I had not intended getting a new dress for Woodridge, but ——"

The "but" was significant, and the compliment it conveyed not lost on Mr. Cooper. "Madam," he said bowing, "it would surpass all my former efforts in the line. To be sure, the dress would require carrying off. But I think, in fact I am sure, that you could do it." He strode away to allow his words to take effect, returning in a few seconds with the details all prepared, and placed a few patterns on the table.

"I have a design for a body," he said, "that would complete the costume to perfection. It would suit you, madam. It is more than becoming: it would, in fact, improve your figure fifty per cent."

This seemed truly irresistible, and proved so to Lettie. The orders were carefully inscribed by Mr. Cooper. "The names and address?" he asked.

"Miss Phillimore," replied Lettie. "Miss Carson," intimating Jeannie. "150, Stanhope Gardens. We leave town this day week; I trust both dresses may be ready."

Mr. Cooper bowed, and the ladies went upstairs to the dressmaker.

Now, it happened that just at this moment an irascible countess made her entry, who was seriously offended at some negligence on the part of a workwoman. Mr. Cooper was called into requisition, and the names were not entered in the book. The countess kept him long, and when at last he was free and flew upstairs to make good his omission, the girls had left and the names had slipped his memory.

It has been remarked that Lettie looked tall. It was her stately

carriage that misguided, for as a matter of fact, Jeannie was the taller of the two. Mr. Cooper allowed himself to be satisfied with the dressmaker's dimensions: so it came about that Lettie's order was made up to Jeannie's pattern, and Jeannie's to Lettie's.

On the morning of the ball, the Squire received the following epistle:

"150, Stanhope Gardens.

"Dearest old Guardian,

"Miss Prim has gone home for a month, and I am bringing Jeannie Carson with me to-morrow. I suppose it will make no difference. She only left school at Christmas and has never been to a ball.

"I mean to appear in such a dress! the like of which has never been seen in Woodridge. White satin and gold embroidery!! A real dazzler, I'm sure you'll say. Your loving

"LETITIA PHILLIMORE."

"A southerly wind and a cloudy sky,
Proclaim a hunter's morning."

So carolled the Squire when he had finished his good breakfast of rump-steak, and was surveying his "pink" and top-boots with the satisfaction of a staunch cross-country rider.

"Poor Philip! I might have offered him a mount. But there, he'll be all the fresher for the ball to-night."

They had a splendid run that day. Two hours and twenty minutes' hard riding. The Squire was not young, but he sat well and headed the field. When he got home, his mare had pulled frightfully, he said: he felt dislocated in every joint: and that afternoon all in the house agreed that he was not the man he used to be.

"I can't take you to the ball to-night, girls," he said. "It's been a bit too much for me. Lady Alcote will call for you. But you must let me see the dresses," he added, with a merry twinkle of his eye.

He sat quietly in his library while the girls unpacked. Presently he took a leaf out of his pocket-book; wrote a few words on it and rang the bell for a servant. "Shan't be there to see the working of it," he muttered, "but I'll give Master Phil the straight tip." And this is how he did it.

"Go in and win, my boy. Make for the white satin and gold embroidery." — "To the barracks at once," he said, handing his missive to the man.

Great was the consternation upstairs when the mistake in the dresses was discovered. The girls might fume and abuse Mr. Cooper and the whole firm of Harley and West as much as they pleased, but there was nothing to be done, and they had to make the best of it.

"It all comes of not going to be fitted," said Lettie regretfully, "but we really were too much occupied. Were we not, Jeannie?"

Yes. Jeannie agreed that they had been too much occupied.

Lady Alcote appeared in due time, and they departed for the ball. The Squire had been found fast asleep in his easy-chair when they were dressed, and so had missed his desired sight of the finery.

Lettie was not over pleased when she beheld Jeannie in the satin: but she kept her dissatisfaction to herself, and even went so far as to say that she considered the braid quite as pretty as the embroidery.

"To be sure that dress was to be seven guineas more, but nobody will know that," she added.

It was a beautiful sight that hunt ball. The old assembly rooms at the Falcon were most tastefully decorated, and the company was the most brilliant that the county could provide. Of course many were tired and disinclined to dance, but that could not be wondered at after such a run. It really didn't much matter. All the ladies who had not actually been with the hounds, were much interested in the subject and quite ready to listen to detailed accounts of everyone's varied experiences. One gets used to this style of conversation during the hunting season, and talks "shop" as complacently and exclusively as any company of barristers or dilettanti.

Philip was there in good time. Nobody as yet knew the extent of his misfortune, and he was not ashamed of the matter. He was standing near to the door watching the arrivals, many of whom he knew. He had quite made up his mind that he would avoid the "gold embroidery" at any price. Fortune-hunting was too contemptible an occupation. Just then Lettie and Jeannie made their appearance.

Philip knew Lady Alcote and shook hands with her; but she did not yet introduce him to her charges. She motioned to him to walk beside her, while the party made a solemn circuit of the room.

Lady Alcote took up her position at the extreme end, where there was a raised daïs and some arm-chairs. She knew what was due to her position, as well as to that of the great heiress who was with her.

Later on Philip was pleased and surprised to find himself introduced to the wearer of the simple dress. Perhaps Lady Alcote knew of his distress and begrudged him even one dance with the heiress. He curled his lips bitterly at the thought and turned away. He fancied that he was beginning already to feel the social disadvantage of being poor. So ready are we all to take to ourselves fancied slights upon our dignity.

He had engaged himself for the next dance to Lettie, and meanwhile busied himself with looking on. His state of mind was moody and discontented.

"The way of the world," he mused. "To witness—an heiress and her less wealthy friend. Naturally the heiress is the less attractive of the two. And ostentatious besides—such a choice of dress for a quiet school-girl-looking débutante. That splendid girl, Miss Phillimore, would have looked like a queen in it."

Thus poor Jeannie Carson was denied the approbation that her sweet little face and innocent manner should have won for her.

Lettie danced well and knew also how to talk to her partners; she noticed that Jeannie was not so well provided for as she might have wished, and in consequence took the opportunity afforded by the end of the dance to make her known to Philip Twyford.

They had a pleasant dance together, but Philip was prejudiced. He was certainly beginning to be sensitive on the subject of his poverty and too proud to dance much with a moneyed lady. Lettie charmed him and he felt safe with her, having made up his mind that she was Miss Carson's companion. Though such a companion surely no man ever saw!

It was a beautiful vision that haunted the poor lieutenant for the remainder of his sleeping hours that night. A fair smiling face and profusion of blonde hair: rosy red lips and large blue eyes.

He decided many times that it would only be common courtesy to go and call the next day, and enquire after the ladies. True, it was a fashion long out of date, but a charming one nevertheless. It would be a sad century to live in when all such little acts of kindness would be despised. The call of enquiries that afternoon, which ended in tea and delightful chat, was only the forerunner of many more. Philip could sing: Lettie could play: Philip was in want of an accompanist: Lettie loved nothing better than accompanying. It was an ordinary state of affairs enough, but productive of infinite pleasure.

The old Squire sat and looked on approvingly, or victimised Jeannie to the extent of a game of backgammon. Philip was too much fascinated to seriously wonder at his uncle's complaisance during his evident neglect of the supposed heiress. He would occasionally relent in his behaviour towards Jeannie: bring her a book to read or some flowers. But the experiment never really answered, and he soon found himself again beside Lettie. Once he felt sure that he heard the old man laughingly mutter something that sounded suspiciously like "deep game," and that was on an occasion when he had been trying his best to appear interested in Jeannie.

At last intimation arrived that his exchange was affected. He was to join the other battalion of his regiment the following month. He had but a short time longer in England, but meant to spend it all at Woodridge. It was foolish, he knew, allowing himself to become more and more infatuated with Miss Phillimore, but at the same time it was irresistible. Compulsory banishment from England was a prospect dismal enough to contemplate: but voluntary banishment from Lettie while in England, too much to expect of a susceptible young officer.

"Come, boy," said the old Squire, the evening before Philip's departure, "you mustn't be off into the drawing-room yet. You haven't done justice to my old port for ever so long. The ladies are attractive, I know, but an old man must not be neglected: especially an

old one who wishes you so well. Philip," he continued, after he had filled his glass with the rare old vintage, and sniffed the aroma, and surveyed the bee's wing with the eye of the good old connoisseur that he was. "Philip, I say. I had no idea that my light words with respect to the heiress would have taken such firm root, and given the start to a wooing so evidently successful."

Philip looked down and fidgeted with his wine glass.

"Speak on, sir," he said. "I do not know that there has been anything so 'evident,' that would warrant your coupling my name with that of Miss Carson."

"Of Miss Carson!" chuckled the old man, "no, I should think not, indeed. And just as well for you, my friend, that there is not." The Squire shook his fist playfully at Philip as he spoke. The young man blushed.

"I am quite aware that it would have been the height of impertinence in me," he said, "to have—to have ——"

"Made love," prompted the Squire.

"To Miss Carson," continued Philip. "But, in spite of her enormous fortune and the immense convenience that it would be to me, I must confess, sir, that not for one moment have I wavered in my allegiance to Miss Phillimore. My intense admiration for that lady has dated from the night of the hunt ball, and has been on the increase ever since."

The Squire shook himself about with violent laughter, and his jolly round face formed a marked contrast to Philip's woe-begone countenance. The young man was somewhat nettled at his uncle's uncalled-for hilarity.

"It seems no laughing matter to me, sir," he said proudly, "though it would appear to amuse you vastly. I fail to perceive the joke in my falling in love with a penniless girl, and being too poor to ask her to marry me."

"Penniless!" roared the Squire, "and who said Letitia was penniless?"

Philip could not say that anyone had exactly committed themselves to the statement: but it had been very apparent from many things the ladies themselves had said and done. And in this he was right.

For it must be confessed that Lettie, having accidentally discovered the mistake he was under, had insisted on Jeannie helping her to keep up the deception. The old Squire had noticed nothing: but it was not lost on the keen-sighted lover that Jeannie wore beautiful jewellery in the evening and Lettie the quietest of ornaments.

The Squire's mirth and Philip's indignation waxed apace. Had his uncle not been an old man, and one to whom he owed much, Philip felt that he must have knocked him down. He never felt so galled in his life.

"The monkeys!" gasped the Squire, when he had somewhat recovered himself; "so they've been imposing upon you, have they"

"Imposing! pray, how so, sir?" asked Philip, bridling up for the ladies when so ugly a word was used.

"My dear boy," returned his uncle, rising and putting his hand on his nephew's shoulder, "you jump too suddenly at conclusions. *Miss Phillimore is the heiress.*"

Philip turned deathly pale: then sank on to his chair, buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

"It is too bad," he moaned; "they did not know what they were doing."

"Cheer up, Phil. I said before, 'go in and win,' and I say it again," said the Squire.

"Sir!" replied the young man, "that is impossible. Had she been penniless I could have begged her to remember me and to wait. . . . but now. . . . no, never. It is cruel, sir, cruel, I say. Bid them good-bye for me, for I cannot."

Philip pressed his uncle's hand, and before the old man had recovered from his surprise, was running with all the speed of his long legs towards the barracks.

The steamer with Philip Twyford on board put in at Malta, and there a letter by the Marseilles mail was awaiting him.

It was as follows:

"Dear Mr. Twyford,

"My guardian has told me everything. Jeannie and I are so sorry we played you such a trick. I have always hated my money, and felt inclined to do so more than ever when it prevented you from saying good-bye to us yourself. But now I find the advantage of wealth. For want of it, you were unable to say, 'Come with me;' with it I can say, 'Come back to me.' I remain,

"Yours sincerely,

"LETITIA PHILLIMORE.

"P.S. I hope you will not despise me for my behaviour.

"LETTIE."

Mr. and Mrs. Philip Twyford now hunt together with the Pytchley hounds and charm the Squire with the sight of perfectly-bred hunters. The old man says he has lost his nerve and prefers quiet riding. Philip respects this preference and is often to be seen ready to open gates for his uncle and keep him out of harm's way.

VALENTINE'S DAY

A Story in Three Chapters

CHAPTER I.

SHE SENDS HER VALENTINE.

THE guard had whistled, and thrown up his hands in that attitude of despair always assumed by a really reliable guard. The train had just begun to slip away from the platform, when a young gentleman rushed up to the moving carriages, opened the first one he came to, and flung himself in, having hurled in various minor articles of baggage before him. Putting his head out of the window, he shouted to a groom standing on the platform: "Have you seen to the luggage?" Receiving an affirmative touch of the hat, he added, at the top of his voice, "Tell them I was in lots of time," and subsided into his seat. Then recollecting the reckless way in which hat-box, sticks, and rug had preceded his entry, he looked round the carriage with a view to collecting them, and met the gaze of a fellow-passenger, at whose feet his hat-box had rolled. This was a girl of about seventeen, with a small pale face, clear-cut features, and a rather large mouth, whose amused expression displayed a very white and regular set of teeth.

"I am afraid I must have startled you by my abrupt entry," said he, agreeably surprised, as he picked up his various possessions, and began to arrange them in the rack above his head; "but it was a very near thing. I ran it rather too close."

"Indeed," rejoined the young lady. "I thought I overheard you say to someone on the platform that they were to be told you were in lots of time."

"A pious fraud!" exclaimed Mr. Trevor—to give our hero his name. "To have to scramble for your seat, as I have just done, is almost worse, in my governor's eyes, than to miss the train altogether."

As neither of the travellers was at all shy, they were soon deeply immersed in conversation, in the course of which the singular coincidence was elicited that they were both bound for the same destination.

"You see," said Mr. Trevor, who, after the ice had been broken by various commonplace remarks, had begun to wax confidential: "my father thinks it is time I got through sundry examinations. So he wouldn't let me go back to college this term, but packed me off to a parson; and I've got to read hard with him for the next three

months. A lively time I shall have of it by all accounts down in Glendale."

"Glendale!" exclaimed the young lady, "why I am going there. How very curious!"

"Indeed!" said Trevor, thinking it might not be so unmitigatedly dreary as he had at first feared. "Do you live there?"

"No; I'm only going to stay with my aunt for a few weeks. It certainly is not a very lively place.—But you knew I was going there," she added, suddenly, "for you have read the label on my hand-bag. I've seen you looking at it a dozen times."

"I have certainly tried to read it," said Trevor, "but I could never get my neck far enough round to see the last word. 'Miss Kate Grey, Miss Foster, The Grange,' is as far as I ever managed. I hope we shall be able to keep the carriage to ourselves till we reach our destination."

And they did have it all to themselves as far as Glendale: during which time Miss Grey had told him that she was very angry at having to leave home to-day, as to-morrow was Valentine's Day, and she felt sure her sisters would open her valentines to see from whom they came, and then pretend they did it under the belief that they were addressed to themselves. Mr. Trevor sympathised with her, inwardly resolving she should have one valentine, at least, that no one should be able to open but herself.

At last they steamed into Glendale. A prim old lady standing on the platform as they passed being identified by Miss Grey as her aunt, the young lady suggested they should shake hands in the carriage. Which they did; Trevor remarking that it wasn't going to be good-bye for long, as of course he should see her often enough during the next month. At which Miss Grey blushed slightly, and said "Perhaps."

On emerging on to the platform Miss Grey was at once claimed and marched off by her aunt to point out her luggage to a porter; while a tall, pale, handsome man of about thirty, in most untidy clerical garb, introduced himself to Trevor as the Reverend Paul Vyner, remarking that he believed he was right in supposing him to be Mr. Trevor.

We must now say a few words in defence of our heroine, whose conduct so far may appear indiscreet, if not reprehensible. Certainly she was wrong to enter into conversation with a strange young man in a railway carriage, and very wrong to more than half promise to meet him on some future occasion; but as we have started a paragraph in defence of her, we must do our best in her behalf.

Firstly, then, she was caught laughing at his unceremonious entry, and so, in the most innocent way, laid herself open to be addressed. Secondly, he was not only a handsome man, but evidently a gentleman. Thirdly, she *was* a flirt, though a very pretty and innocent

one, and was very glad to meet with some one likely to relieve the monotony of a month in the country with no one to speak to but an elderly maiden aunt.

Now all this may account for her behaviour down to this point: whether it will continue to do so, is for the reader to judge.

"Aunt," began Miss Grey at lunch, "who is the rector of the parish?"

"Mr. Vyner, my dear," replied Miss Foster. "The Reverend Paul Vyner. He is a Cambridge man, and, I am told, of very good family. However, he is poor, and takes pupils. He conducts the service very badly, and is utterly useless in the parish."

"Oh! Has he any pupils just now?" enquired Miss Grey, innocently.

"No, my dear," replied her aunt; "and I don't see what difference it would make to you if he had."

For Miss Foster, though a kind-hearted and good woman, was a great stickler for propriety. Her other main characteristic was that of saying disagreeable things she didn't mean, and was sorry for afterwards. This quality she was especially proud of, aired it on all occasions, and called it speaking her mind.

Miss Kate, having learned all she wanted to know, now glided gently but swiftly away from the dangerous topic of young men, and being a bright, clever girl, succeeded in producing a favourable impression on her aunt. During the afternoon she retired to unpack. In the course of this occupation she came upon a large envelope, which she took out of her trunk and balanced thoughtfully in her hand; then shook out the contents on to the dressing-table and began sorting them through. They were half a dozen cards, bearing the devices common to the feast of St. Valentine, which she had brought with her to despatch from Glendale to various acquaintances. Having selected one which seemed to suit her purpose, she wrote two lines on it in pencil, and, placing it in an envelope, directed it to

"A. T.,
"Care of the Rev. P. Vyner.
"The Vicarage,
"Glendale."

For though Trevor knew her name, it being written in full on her luggage, she only knew his initials, which she could see painted on his hat-box. However, having ascertained from him that he was going to live at the Vicarage, and from her aunt that the Vicar's name was Paul Vyner, and that he had no other pupils just now, she felt sure that her letter, though vaguely addressed, must find the right person.

CHAPTER II.

HE SENDS HIS VALENTINE.

THE next morning at the Vicarage, when Mr. Trevor lounged down an hour late for breakfast, he found his future tutor in a curious state of bewilderment. "Considerably knocked out of time," commented that shrewd youth, when Mr. Vyner answered his apologies by saying in an absent way, "I believe it is only selfishness." And then perceiving by Trevor's face of astonishment that he must have said something very odd, he got up from his untouched breakfast, and went into the garden, pleading a headache.

This is what had happened.

On coming down that morning, he saw on the mantel-piece, in the spot where his letters were always placed, an envelope with his name written across it. Being the most careless of men he never noticed the "A. T." written above, tore open the envelope, flung it behind him, and to his surprise, found in his hands a card, bearing on it a gracefully-executed bunch of primroses, while underneath was pencilled in a lady's hand:

"In the spring a young man's fancy,
Lightly turns to thoughts of love."

His first thought was to examine the envelope: he turned round to pick it up, but, alas! he had thrown it into the very heart of the fire, and nothing remained of it but a sheet of black ash. After all, there would be nothing in this to account for the Vicar's mental disquietude. The reception of a valentine from an unknown hand would hardly disturb the equanimity of most young men. But Kate's seed had fallen on fruitful ground. It was so singularly apposite (when opened by the wrong person), and chimed in so well with many of Mr. Vyner's thoughts during the last year or two, that, while the valentine in itself, or its sender, never cost him another thought, the tempest of recollections, wishes, self-reproaches, and plans for the future that it raised in him were more than he could at once allay. The reflections that had so engrossed him at the breakfast-table, and which he was now attempting to reduce to order, by walking up and down the garden puffing furiously at a big pipe, ran briefly something like this:

"Why don't I marry? Is it, as I tell myself, because I do not wish? Because I am too poor? Because no girl would marry a slovenly object like me? Or is it because I am too selfish? Because I should have to sacrifice so much that has now become second nature to me? My bachelor's ease; my summers on the Continent; my untidy habits; and, sensual wretch that I am, my claret, cigars and novels? Do I do my duty here? Not a bit: I know no one intimately; I care for no one's opinion; I hate the place. With a wife, all that might be changed. A pleasant companion and a comfortable home are surely

worth the surrender of a few of my special self-indulgences. I should be a better and a happier man. Besides," he thought, with a touch of selfishness on the other side of his argument, "she could do that horrid visiting: I absolutely dare not. I should resent anybody coming here and telling me I was leading a wretched and godless life. Why should anybody else be better pleased if I drop in at their cottage, and tell them so? Women do that kind of thing much better than we do."

Thus the result of Miss Kate's valentine was that, for his own good and the good of his parish, the Rev. Paul Vyner decided to take unto himself a wife.

During the afternoon of Valentine's Day, Miss Grey started out for a walk, and we blush to state that she stopped the first rustic she met, and asked the way to the Vicarage. "It will amuse me to see him, and please him to see me," ruminated the young lady. "And after all, where is the harm so long as we understand each other?" With which very stale apology for flirtation she comforted herself, and strolled on until she came to the Vicarage.

The house, a handsome, old, red-brick building, stood in extensive grounds surrounded by a high fence. On one side, between this fence and the adjoining fields, ran a narrow lane, and down this lane Kate made her way, trying to persuade herself that she went there because it was pretty, and a likely spot to find primroses, and not because it was now possible for her to see into and be seen from the Vicarage grounds.

So she dawdled listlessly down the lane, half-amused and half-angry with her own folly; at one minute wishing to see Trevor, at another, hoping she should not; poking the end of her parasol into the banks as she passed, with a vague sort of idea that that was a recognised way of hunting for wild flowers.

Suddenly she was brought to a full-stop by a voice right above her, enquiring if she was looking for anything. Kate turned her eyes up, and mentally decided that she had seldom seen a handsomer man than the one now leaning over the hedge, and in whose eyes she was quick to detect no little admiration of herself.

And certainly the Parson in his lawn-tennis costume was a goodly sight. Six feet high, long in the leg, broad in the shoulder, and flat in the back, his loose flannel attire displayed as much as his dilapidated clericals concealed his personal advantages. His handsome, clean-shaved face, glowing with exercise, small head, and closely-cropped dark curls, surmounted by a shooting-cap, which he had pushed back as far as was compatible with its remaining on his head at all, formed a tout ensemble that was undeniably pleasant.

But before going any further, let us just account for the Vicar's presence and his pupil's absence.

After lunch Mr. Vyner had suggested a game of tennis. Both

being expert, they had no difficulty in keeping themselves warm, even in February, and were just playing the deciding game of a hard-fought set, when suddenly Trevor remarked :

"I say, isn't this Valentine's Day?"

"Yes," replied his opponent, thinking that it was the first time for ten years that he had had any special reason for recollecting the date. "Yes ; why?"

"Well!" said Trevor, "I ought to send a valentine. I'm afraid I'm rather late about it ; where can I get one?"

"I don't know much about that kind of thing," returned the Parson ; "but I should say not in Glendale."

"I think X—— is your nearest town. How far is that off?" enquired Trevor.

"About two miles."

"Then, if you'll excuse me," said the young gentleman, turning rather red, "I think I'll run over there."

"Certainly," replied the Vicar, surprised at finding himself so sympathetic.

And so it came to pass that while Mr. Trevor hurried over to X—— as fast as his legs would carry him, his preceptor took a stroll round the Vicarage grounds, and coming to a railing in the fence overlooking the lane, leant over it lost in reverie.

"And as in uffish thought he stood," he was startled by the apparition of a young lady strolling slowly down the lane towards him. "Surely," said the Parson, "you are a little too early ; they don't blossom till May." Then seeing by Kate's extreme discomposure that she was meditating a hasty retreat, he deceitfully added : "At least, most of them. Of course there might be a few early ones about, but they are rather difficult to find. I'll come and help you hunt for them, if I may."

The next minute he was on the path by her side, looking rather ashamed of his own alacrity. Though of late he had abjured female society, he was not one of those unfortunate men who cannot open their mouths in a lady's presence; and in a few minutes he had set Kate at her ease by a few commonplace remarks. Introducing himself as the Vicar, he expressed a belief that she was not a resident in his parish. Miss Grey faltered an apology for her trespass, said who she was and where she was staying, and in a very little time had completely recovered her equanimity, and was chatting affably with her new friend.

A very pleasant change the Vicar found it from his ordinary afternoon's employment, to saunter down a lane with a pretty and amusing girl. There was a spice of romance about the suddenness of their acquaintance that just suited his present state of mind ; while the mischievous Kate almost laughed outright, when she remembered that she had come out to look for the pupil, at finding herself strolling about in a confidential manner with the tutor.

But all good things must have an end, and when they had walked to the top of the lane and back once or twice, Miss Grey said she must be going.

"I hope I shall see you again shortly," said he, as they parted. "I must furbish up some excuse to call upon Miss Foster." And then he leant over the gate, and watched her graceful figure to the corner in the road, where she turned back and smiled. The Vicar, forgetting alike his manners and his cloth, kissed his hand to her, then bolted down the lane as hard as he could go, blushing like a girl; until he was suddenly pulled up in his stride by a thought so ridiculous that it first made him laugh, and then made him downright angry with himself for being such an idiot. That thought was: "I have decided I want a wife: why won't she do?"

On reaching the house he found Trevor just returned. He held a parcel in his hand and asked the Vicar if he had a small box that he could pack it in, as he wished to despatch it by post.

"Come into my study," said the latter, "and we will see what we can find."

After a few minutes' rummaging about, Trevor found one to suit him. It was a small card box that had lately come down from London with some fishing-tackle, and still had the Vicar's address upon it. This box Trevor carried off: and placing the parcel within it, despatched it to Miss Grey, astutely remarking to himself that "It would be a pity to scratch old Vyner's name out, as then she won't guess who it comes from; but knowing I am at the Vicarage, and seeing the Parson's name on the box, I shall get the credit of it."

CHAPTER III.

THE RESULT.

It was with considerably more consternation than pleasure that, next morning, when Miss Grey opened this parcel, she found herself the possessor of a very handsome locket and chain. Never doubting that the Parson was the donor, she argued that she had given him no right to take such a liberty. She grew angry with him for his want of tact; and then remembering her valentine to Trevor, and the fact that she had taken that eventful walk solely to meet him, she grew angry with herself, and also was illogical enough to be angry with him for not meeting her or sending any answer to her missive; for which variety of reasons she avoided the side of the village on which the Vicarage lay.

Trevor, not seeing or hearing anything of her, decided he had offended her by sending her presents on so short an acquaintance, and cursed his folly for so doing; but of the three Mr. Vyner's plight was the worst. That ridiculous idea of his, that Kate, if he could persuade her, would make him the very wife he wanted, would keep

recurring to him. In vain, he told himself he had only seen her once; in vain he tried to persuade himself that what he had seen he didn' like; he was haunted by the idea, and at the end of a day or two he made up his mind to see her again at all hazards.

Having arrived at this decision, he was prompt to act upon it. Making as an excuse a subscription for a Christmas treat to the poor children of the parish, he called the very next morning upon Miss Foster. That good lady received him in a manner peculiarly her own.

"Good morning, Mr. Vyner," said she; "it is a very long time since I have seen you. I suppose you want some money."

Mr. Vyner explained the object of his visit as well as he could, remarking that the idea only occurred to him that very morning; that the third week in February was late for a Christmas treat; but that he supposed children could eat cake at any time in the year.

Kindly Miss Foster told him that he was the worst clergyman both in the church and the parish she had ever met with, and then got up to fetch her cheque-book, remarking as she went out of the room: "That's my niece. Katie, dear, Mr. Vyner, our vicar."

There was a very embarrassing pause when they found themselves alone. Then he said, blunderingly: "You see, Miss Grey, I found an excuse."

"I hope," said Kate, "you don't mean me to believe that this children's treat exists only in your imagination, for my aunt has gone to get some money to pay for it."

"No, not exactly," said the Vicar, who felt himself on rather dangerous ground.

"Because," continued the young lady, "I should not think very highly of you, if such were the case."

And then rapidly leaving the subject, she remarked in very chilling accents upon the state of the weather.

Mr. Vyner, who was no fool, in spite of his infatuation, was quick to perceive by Miss Grey's manner, that he had not found favour in her sight, and immediately there flashed across his mind a remembrance of the parting salute he had waved to her. Just then Miss Foster's step was heard outside. Determining to make the most of his opportunity, he bent down over her seat, and said:

"Miss Grey, I owe you an apology for my conduct. At the risk of making matters worse, I'm going to beg of you to take a walk to-morrow afternoon in the lane where we met before, and I will try and remove the bad impression I fear I have made on you."

Before he could receive any reply, Miss Foster, entering, handed him a cheque, and begged to know if it was enough. The Vicar, who felt heartily ashamed of this part of the business, began to stammer something about munificence, but was speedily cut short by the old lady, who said that now he had got what he wanted, he need not make himself miserable by stopping any longer out of politeness; that

she herself was not amusing company; that Kate never flirted in her aunt's presence, whatever she did out of it; that doubtless his duties (strongly emphasized) in the parish required his presence elsewhere; and fairly drove the poor gentleman out of the house.

The next afternoon the Vicar, who was now growing old in deceit, gave Trevor a holiday, despatched him to X— on various pretences, and then went and sat on the railing, where he had first seen Kate, and smoked a pipe and waited. He had resolved that he would fall in love with her if she would let him (rather a gratuitous resolve on his part, seeing he had already done so, we fancy); and he was wondering how long she would consider he ought to cultivate her acquaintance before making any advances of that sort, when her slender figure came slowly down the lane. In another minute he was below, shaking hands with her.

"I don't think I ought to have done this," said Kate, "but as you asked me, you must not think any the worse of me for it; and"—extracting the obnoxious parcel from her pocket—"I have brought you back your very kind present."

"Done what?" said the astounded Vicar.

"Brought back the chain and locket," said Kate. "I was so sorry you sent it: I have been very silly, but I never gave you the right to send me this."

"But," said Paul, turning Trevor's luckless valentine over and over in his hand, "I never sent you anything. Hullo! this box is directed to me. Why! it's that young scamp Trevor, who sent it you; I gave him the box. How came he to send you a valentine?"

Poor Kate! This was turning the tables upon her with a vengeance.

"I suppose because I sent him one first," said she, defiantly.

"Well!" returned the Reverend Paul, "this is most extraordinary. I suppose you sent it by a messenger. There was only one letter delivered at the Vicarage on Valentine's Day, and that was for me."

"Oh!" said Kate, glad to get a chance, however poor, of carrying the war a little into the enemy's country. "Is she good-looking?"

"Who?" said the Vicar, innocently.

"Why, the young lady who sent you the valentine, of course."

"I haven't the least idea who sent it. I burnt the envelope without looking at either writing or post-mark. Here it is," he added, taking a crumpled piece of card from his pocket, and handing it to her.

"Why!" said Kate, "that's the valentine I sent Mr. Trevor."

"Impossible!" cried Paul; "it was addressed to me."

"No—I am sure this is it. It was addressed, 'A. T., care of the Rev. P. Vyner.' You see," said Katie, "I knew he was at the Vicarage, but I didn't know his name."

"I am so sorry," began the Parson. "I quite thought it was addressed to me. Indeed, I hardly looked at it outside at all. It

stood where all my letters are always placed, and I opened it, never doubting it was for me."

"I am so glad he never got it," said Kate. "I have been ashamed of myself ever since I sent it. I am afraid you must be dreadfully disgusted with me."

"I think she's very pretty," said Paul, smiling rather wickedly.

"Who?" asked Kate.

"Who? Why the young lady that sent me the valentine, of course."

"Oh!" said Kate slowly, and looking down on the ground.

Then, as if anxious to change the subject, she suddenly asked, "What were you going to apologise to me about? As you didn't send me that thing, how did you think you had offended me?"

"I was afraid you were angry because I kissed my hand to you when we parted last time," said Paul, stammering and blushing and hardly knowing what he said.

"I suppose I ought to have been offended," said Kate, laughing, "but the truth is I didn't think you quite knew what you were doing. I—I forgot all about it the next moment."

There was a minute's silence, broken suddenly by Paul. "Kate, I may offend you in reality now, but I cannot help it. Will you forgive *me?* Nay, more: will you give me some answer, if I ask you—to be my wife?"

"Your wife!" cried Kate. "Impossible, Mr. Vyner! I know nothing of you, and what you know of me is not to my credit. You cannot mean what you say."

"Listen to me," said Paul, quite in earnest now, and catching both her hands in his. "I have loved you since the first moment I saw you; I have tried to persuade myself that it was impossible. I have laughed at my own folly (as I thought it), but all to no purpose. Kate, I love you. What chance have I of winning your love in return? Not now: I am not so foolish as to suppose you can answer me yet. But in the future?"

"But I know so little of you," stammered Kate.

"That, at any rate," said Paul, who was beginning to think he should have his own way, "can easily be remedied. Suppose, for instance, we walk up and down here once or twice, and cultivate each other's acquaintance."

So they wandered up and down the lane for the rest of the afternoon. We have never learnt exactly what passed between them, but they seemed to be perfectly satisfied with each other's company.

Suddenly the tête-à-tête was broken in upon by a voice from the railing where Kate had first seen the Parson. "Hallo!" said Mr. Trevor, "I hope you two are getting on all right. Good-afternoon, Miss Grey."

"Trevor, come here," said the Reverend Paul. "I wish to give you this back from Miss Grey. Don't take offence, my boy, you must see you had no earthly right to send it."

"There's only one decent way out of this hole," said Trevor imperturbably; "and that is, that Miss Grey should keep it as a wedding present."

And Miss Grey was graciously pleased to receive it on these terms.

Dear old Miss Foster, when told of the engagement, remarked after a dinner-party, in front of at least twenty people:

"That her niece, Kate, was a bold, unladylike girl; and that Mr. Vyner was no better than a common swindler, who ought to be in prison for obtaining money under false pretences." (For Mr. Vyner sent the good lady's cheque back.) However, she cried all through the wedding-service, and insisted on refurnishing the Vicarage (which certainly wanted it) from top to bottom.

SALT-FISH REFLECTIONS.

'Tis Lent. Obedient crowds draw near
To shed the penitential tear;
The world forsook, its pleasures blamed,
The mind to solemn tone is framed.

'Tis gently sad to see no dish,
Save that which holds some luckless fish,
To miss the cutlets, roasts and stews,
And feed like some poor starved recluse.

Ye who may feast throughout the year,
Now to your frugal meals draw near;
Think, as your passions thus ye slay,
Of Job, who fasteth every day.

Hold ye your fasts, if thus ye please;
Perchance they give your spirits ease;
But do not add to secret hoards
The pounds ye thus save at your boards.

Send them, broadcast throughout the land,
To those who bow 'neath sorrow's hand.
So shall your Lenten fasts be blessed,
And ye at Mercy's shrine confessed.

MINNIE DOUGLAS.

M. ELLEN STAPLES. R. AND E. TAYLOR.

AT THE END OF THE AVENUE, HE PASSED MISS DIXON, THE GOVERNESS AND THE CHILDREN.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1884.

THE WHITE WITCH.

CHAPTER X.

DOUBTS AND MYSTERY.

MRS. MAYNE sat at the Abbey breakfast-table, pouring out the coffee as usual and handing the cups around. Her fainting-fit of the previous evening did not appear to have affected her. Mr. Mayne had unhesitatingly accepted Mary Dixon's assertion of its cause—over-fatigue from walking too much after dinner. Godfrey doubted. To him the cause had looked more like a spasm of sudden terror. Circumstances were rendering Godfrey Mayne what he had never been in his life—suspicious and watchful. The topic of conversation at the moment had been gambling, and then his father had spoken of Sir William Hunt: and Godfrey naturally asked himself whether either the topic or the name had brought terror to his step-mother; and, if so, why.

Turning to his father now, he enquired whether it was true that Sir William Hunt had returned.

"Yes," replied Mr. Mayne. "Wilding told me so last night."

"Who is Sir William Hunt, mamma?" asked Mary in a low tone.

"I do not know, dear; I don't think I have seen him," answered Mrs. Mayne, quietly. But Godfrey wished he could see her hands, whose tell-tale restlessness always betrayed when she was at all agitated.

"You will see him soon," said Mr. Mayne to his wife. "He always comes over here the first thing, without waiting for the ceremony of my calling first on him. We are very old friends, Laura. And he will come all the quicker, now that the Abbey has ladies in it."

Mrs. Mayne glanced hurriedly at her daughter; but the latter was helping herself to another egg, and did not appear to notice. At that moment Mary caught Godfrey's eye: he concluded that she thought she was being watched.

"Where does this Sir William Hunt live, sir, and why is it that we

have not heard anything of him before?" she enquired of Mr. Mayne in a pretty, saucy manner.

"Because, Miss Inquisitive, he has been away; as he generally is. He has a place on the other side of Cheston—Goule Park. He never stays there long now, and will be off again soon, no doubt."

"Dear me!" cried Mary. "Does he not like his neighbours?"

"Sir William's neighbours have nothing to do with it, young lady. He has a little frivolous wife—as frivolous as you are—who won't let him rest there. She hates Goule Park; calls it the family vault. She used to love it just as much as she dislikes it now; but since a dreadful event happened, the news of which was brought to her there ——"

"And where do they live when they are not at Goule?" interrupted Mary. "I think she is quite right not to let her husband stay there if she doesn't like the place herself."

"Quite right to drag her husband away from it as soon as he is peacefully settled down there! Oh, Mary, a fine wife you'll make! Don't you come to me for a character."

"Of course not, sir. I shall apply to—to Dick. Where do they live, though, when they are not at Goule Park?"

"Chiefly in Scotland. Sir William has a fine old place there."

But to Godfrey, her unusual animation seemed rather forced: he was not sure, though, whether this was fact or fancy.

In the course of the morning, Ernest Underwood came in, attired in the fashion as usual. He invited Mary to a drive in his dog-cart.

"You know you enjoyed that drive when I brought you home, Miss Dixon," urged the young man; "and you know how carefully I drive."

"Oh yes; and I remember finding myself suddenly jerked up a foot or so, when your horse shied at that red cart and sent the wheel on to the path," said Mary.

"But I did that on purpose. I knew you liked a little excitement. You wouldn't have me jog you quietly along as if you were—were an old lady, would you?"

"Well, you will hardly believe I can be so mean-spirited, but I do really set as high a value on my life as if I were sixty."

"No! Do you mean it?" cried Ernest, with mock seriousness. "Now, I had intended to ask leave to give you a little treat. We have just got a new pair of chestnuts, one of which has not been properly broken in. I drove them tandem into Cheston the other day, and we killed a dog, and overturned a market-stall, and frightened a flock of sheep, and backed into a shop-window—and I had to pay for a new one. Now I did mean to try to get you with me when I drive them the second time."

"Dear me! How I should have liked to go, Mr. Ernest! Only—mamma would not let me, you know."

Thus they kept on, angering Godfrey. He began to hate Ernest

and Mary too. The young man at length took his departure, saying he should call again on the morrow. Back he came in a moment.

"Miss Dixon, do come out and see my new harness, and tell me whether you think there's too much plating about it? My mother says the whole turn-out looks like an advertisement for a circus, and that people will expect me to offer them hand-bills."

So they went out laughing, and presently Godfrey followed. He found them standing by the dog-cart, talking in lower tones and a little more seriously; and he thought this mood even more unbecoming than their mirth had been. Then Ernest took a lingering farewell and drove off, repeating his promise to call on the morrow. As Miss Dixon turned back smiling, Godfrey had the pleasure of seeing that the smile suddenly left her face as her eyes fell upon him.

"Does he not look nice?" said she, aggravatingly turning again to watch the dog-cart and its owner. "He is always so neat and trim and well-dressed; he makes me feel like—like a nursery-maid watching the horse-guards."

"Do you admire that got-up look about a man—as if he were put together with glue and pins?" retorted Godfrey. "It may be all very well in town, for men who have nothing to do and no brains; and of course it is excusable in Ernest here, being no better than a boy. *I* think that in the country that sort of thing is ridiculous."

Miss Dixon retaliated. "I cannot see that it is less manly to ride or drive twenty miles a day in a well-fitting coat, than to lounge about with a cigar in one's mouth in ——" She stopped short. It really seemed that she had grown excited in defence of her friend, and suddenly remembered that she was going too far.

Godfrey finished the sentence for her. "In an old velvet shooting coat with a frayed-out collar? I dare say you are right. But what can you expect from a boor, Miss Dixon?"

And this was the use he made of the chance fortune had given him of a tête-à-tête with her! He had been wishing for one all night. He had meant, by dint of subtle questioning, to try to gain a clue to the aversion from card-playing shown by her and her mother, and to the agitation of the latter on hearing the name of Sir William Hunt.

Without attempting an apology, Miss Dixon passed him, to enter the house. She was met by Lydia, her mother's maid, who said that Mrs. Mayne would be glad to speak to her in her room. Godfrey, left to himself, wandered about the grounds for a little while, restless and dissatisfied: at war with Ernest Underwood, with Miss Dixon, and with himself. What was coming to him, he wondered. What could be the matter with him? With *him*, who until lately could not be roused out of his apathy!

Mrs. Mayne was seated back on the sofa in her dressing-room, agitated, nervous; her pale face bearing traces of tears. She held one hand out weakly, as one in want of help, to her daughter, when the girl came in and knelt down beside her.

"You don't come up to me, Mary! I have wanted to speak to you ever since last night. What is to be done? I am so terribly afraid of arousing suspicion in my husband!"

"Dear, kind, old Mr. Mayne! He would never suspect anyone. It is not him you need fear, mamma, but Godfrey. Godfrey's grey eyes, still though they look, see everything."

"Oh, Mary, Mary, what shall we do? Who would have thought of Sir William's living near *here!* He may call; he is sure to call; Mr. Mayne said so: and then ——"

"Now, mamma, do be calm! If you excite yourself you may become really ill. You must just lay out a plan in case Sir William does call ——"

Mrs. Mayne shuddered.

"And act up to it," continued Mary, removing the finger which her mother had placed upon her lips. "Listen. As long as the danger lasts, that is, until Sir William has left Goule Park again—and Mr. Mayne said, you know, that would be very soon—we must not sit in the drawing-room in the afternoon at the time that visitors call. If word be brought to you that Sir William has called, you must be ill—a sudden and violent headache, or something that prevents your seeing him. Oh, it will be all very easy," added the girl in a cheering tone, giving nevertheless an anxious glance at her mother.

"But we may meet him out, Mary! We are sure to come face to face with him somewhere."

"It is not at all sure. You must wear a thick veil. And Mr. Mayne was so much concerned at what we called your over-fatigue last night, that we can refuse any invitation we think dangerous on that ground. Do not despond, mamma. He will soon go away again, and all fear will be over."

"Ah, you can talk calmly and prepare calmly; you are so cold!"

"Cold!" echoed the girl, her voice rising from its low murmur for the first time. "You call me cold because you do not know what heat is. Why, my whole life is a fever—kept under most of the time; forgotten every now and then, when I am with the Thornhill children or laughing with Ernest; but always smouldering underneath, ready to burst out as soon as I am alone. I seem 'cold' because I am always at white heat; I seem 'prepared' because I can never forget. I can no longer find contentment in reading, as I used to do; if I get hold of any book exciting enough to claim my attention, I am sure to find in it, sooner or later, some reference to my own secret, or some foreshadowing of my own fate. And then I keep my eyes on the page, without being able to read further, but afraid lest if I raised them they should meet those of some other person who had come softly into the room and who would see my face change."

Mary Dixon paused. It had been a strange irrepressible outbreak.

Mrs. Mayne tried feebly to extricate her own limp hand, which lay in her daughter's, and restlessly turned away her head, as if the slim fingers and the steady dark eyes burnt her.

"You frighten me so, Mary!" she whispered miserably. "I am more afraid of you than I am of anybody, of Sir William even ——"

"Mamma!"

"I am, when you are in those fits. I never know what you will say or do. You are so—so *rebellious* in your suffering. It all comes of that. What made you sing to Godfrey Mayne last night?"

"I don't know. It was imprudent; a rash, mad impulse such as I have had to regret before, as Heaven knows, and *you* know. And I suffered for it, as I deserved. Do not reproach me, mamma; you, at least, must not."

"No, no, I did not mean to," said Mrs. Mayne hurriedly. "But —look here, Mary: are you encouraging Ernest Underwood?"

"No, no. I have told you before that I must have some relief; I can find it best in bright, high spirits such as his or the children's. He is only a boy; it is just a mild flirtation to him and nothing more, and I shall take care to keep it so. If there were to ensue a danger of his caring for me seriously, I would tell him ——"

"Tell him!" shrieked Mrs. Mayne.

"Mamma, who is excited now? I would tell him enough to turn his thoughts from me: to show him that Mary Dixon is one who must stand apart, who cannot be wooed as other girls can. Any little invented tale would do; his brains are so shallow. I am not to be cruel to you, do you say? No fear: you know better than that. I will be careful with everyone, in all ways; I will, indeed. Only don't be afraid, and don't think a thunderbolt is going to fall if I laugh and talk a little with a lad who is all talk and laughter. As for my singing, I think I can get Godfrey Mayne to say nothing about that."

"Mary, don't you think you are wrong in treating Godfrey as you do? You and he have been hitherto so antagonistic to each other. Better be friendly with him. Though he seems determined, it is not difficult to lead him, if one goes to work the right way. Look how I managed his engagement to the parson's daughter. He is really a kind-hearted fellow; though he may not seem so to you from the dislike you appear to have taken to each other. I am sure you could persuade him to anything, if you chose to try."

A faint colour rose to the girl's face, pale till then. "And *you* wish me to try! I do not understand."

"No, no, don't look like that, Mary. I do not want you to make Godfrey fall in love with you. Were you thinking *that?* though there's no danger of your doing that—he is too cold. But I think you should not make an enemy of him. You are pretty and attractive: draw him to you in a sisterly way. You know it could not matter, now that he is engaged to Elspeth."

"Don't you think it might matter to her?" asked Mary, slowly.

"Certainly not. Love with these rustic youths and maidens is a pretty little milk-and-water friendship. Not at all like the dreadful thing we have known it to be, Mary," said Mrs. Mayne, in a fearful whisper. "Two people just want to be married, and they meet each other, that is all. Or else, the one wants to marry and the other is gently driven to it, as I drove Godfrey."

"Do you think it was right to do that?"

"I did it for the best. You know why I did it. And they will be very happy; they are just suited to each other: he is idle and aimless, and she would never want anything different. You must not reproach me with that, Mary."

"I am not reproaching you; I am reproaching myself for having come to Croxham at all. Why did you urge me to come?"

"Mr. Mayne would have you—and I thought you might as well come. I wanted to have you under my own eye again. Besides, where would you have made a home, now Madame de Breteuil is dead? You have been better in health and brighter since you came. And if only you can quiet Godfrey's suspicions I shall be very glad you did come; very glad indeed."

"I will try," said Mary, quietly. "For otherwise there will be danger."

That evening Godfrey appeared at dinner with diamond studs in his shirt-front, and on his father's remarking upon this effort with laughing admiration, which somehow irritated Godfrey, he said with indifference that he had mislaid his others. Whether affected by this burst of magnificence or from other causes, Miss Dixon seemed anxious to atone for her neglect of him by being very charming and by giving him at least as much attention as she gave to his father.

In the drawing-room after dinner, Mrs. Mayne suggested to her husband a game of draughts, and they sat down to it; while Mary took her work to a distant window. There was not light enough for her to do much, but her head ached and she wanted to be quiet. She had let her crewels fall into her lap, and was pressing her hands wearily to her head, when a smelling-bottle in Godfrey's hand was silently offered to her.

"Thank you," said she, with a start; and she took it and leaned back in her chair, without any more words.

"You look very tired," said Godfrey, putting his back against the window-frame.

"Yes, I am tired; I don't know why. That was what made me so cross to-day."

"Cross! I don't think Underwood found you cross."

"But you did."

"I! That is a different matter. I have not his entertaining powers, you know."

"He is a nice, bright, amusing fellow," carelessly returned Mary

"But then, of course, he is only a boy, and I have never tried him with any subject more serious than 'chaff.' I don't wonder you are amazed at my thinking so much of him, but that brightness of his is delightful when one is in an idle mood."

"You seemed to be talking seriously enough when you were standing with him by his dog-cart."

"The subject was serious enough to him—a new patent bit. I expect you would soon get to the end of his information on any subject really interesting."

"Not sooner than you would get to the end of mine," said Godfrey hastily, annoyed at the imputation of being well-informed, or learned, or anything but the dashing, devil-may-care fellow it had suddenly become, for the moment, his ambition to be—or to appear to be.

"Well, if I really wanted a serious opinion, I would rather take yours than his; on horses or anything else."

This was rather daring, perhaps, to a man who already suspected her good faith. But it was clever, for of course Godfrey was not free from the common weakness of flattering himself he knew something about horses: and he was pleased.

"A serious opinion you can get in a book, Miss Dixon. What you want in a man is an agreeable companion."

"There are different ways of being agreeable, Mr. Godfrey. Young Underwood's rattling talk and energetic manner would seem rather overpowering if I were tired, or ill, or in a thoughtful mood; I might wish he were quieter then."

"I see. Then what you want in an ideal companion is, Ernest's high spirits when you are well and happy, and my dull sulkiness when you are ill and miserable."

"Not quite that," said she, laughing. "I shouldn't talk of your dull sulkiness, for instance."

"Not to me, of course. You would say my 'refined and thoughtful manner.' And yet, I don't know; you can be outspoken sometimes. You gave it me pretty straight to-day."

"I beg your pardon. I am so sorry; I really don't know what evil spirit induced me to be so impertinent. It was an evil spirit, indeed, and not Mary Dixon at all."

"I am not sure about that. There are so many Mary Dixons. There is a Mary Dixon who is silent and pale and scarcely knows how to smile; there is one who is all brightness and laughter, and can infect a whole company with her own animation. There is one who can persuade a man against his will by her charming wiles; and there is another, a singing Mary Dixon, who is, I believe, her very soul."

"Not at all," said she, in light retort, leaving him to stroke his moustache and wish he had not been quite so fervent. "A poor creature so mortal that she cannot sing one song without exhaustion, the effects of which she feels even next day."

"Is it so?" cried he, impulsively.

"Indeed it is. I meant to ask you to be so kind as to keep my unlucky accomplishment a secret; for if it is once known that I can sing, of course I shall have to sing: and I cannot and must not. In return, I promise you I will sometimes sing to you again."

"Thank you," said he, warmly. "I never experienced so enthralling a pleasure in my life. I should never have thought a young lady could sing like that without years of special study and practice."

"Of course not. I have had the special study and the practice. I was trained for public singing, but my health gave way before I could appear."

Godfrey did not understand the tumult her words woke in him. He felt sympathy with her disappointment, pity for her delicacy; but he felt, too, a passionate impulse of gladness that was not so easy to account for. Why should it give him this acute pleasure?—what could it matter to him whether she had sung in public or not? Her thoughts appeared to have wandered away; she looked out into the night-mist over the garden and the meadow with a stern, set expression that he could not read.

"You have studied in Italy, I suppose. In Rome?" he asked at random, anxious to make her speak again and look at him.

But her face changed to sudden terror as she started and faced him again, and he knew that he had struck some painful chord. Clever though Miss Dixon was, she was too young to be a perfect mistress of the arts of concealment, and she let it be seen that a random shaft, like this, had struck home. She recovered herself at once.

"You quite startled me. I was thinking of—of the time when they used to tell me that my voice would move Europe. They tell all young singers that, I believe," she added, drily.

But Godfrey had received his check. Was she deceiving him again? The thought made him furious. He wanted to get the truth out of her, by persuasion, by soft words and tones, by satire; anyhow. But all he could do was to stand there and pull his moustache, which the ladies of the neighbourhood called golden, and his father, sandy.

Mary rose and went to the table, where the lamp was, and looked on at the draughts. Godfrey left the room and shut himself into the refectory in the worst of humours. At first he couldn't find his cigar-case, then he had mislaid his cigar-lights, and when he had found them none of them would light. He stood there box in hand, scraping with one match after another, muttering as the head blew off the first: "Hang it!" off the second: "Confound it!" and as the third match broke in his angry fingers: "Curse her!"

That calmed him. Godfrey hardly ever swore, and the strong expression which had involuntarily escaped him woke him to the consciousness that he was making a fool of himself. He quietly lit his cigar and stretched himself in the American chair to moralise.

"An unprincipled woman," thought he to himself as he glared sternly at the ceiling, "is like a plague-spot whose presence spreads contagion wherever it appears, and the remedy ought to be the same—isolation." Having thus thrown the blame of his impatience over the matches upon Miss Dixon, he continued his reflections.

"Already that silly lad Underwood is mad about her. And I declare I think about her myself twice as much as I do about Elspeth. Yes, she is poisoning all our lives; she ought to be isolated. I must try to find out what it is that is amiss in her antecedents. Her mother was frightened—for her sake, of course—at the name of old Hunt: and she herself certainly showed fear at the mention of Rome. What is it all? I'll win the girl's confidence if I can—not to injure her, simply for my own satisfaction. And there's another point: who is to know whether her true name is Dixon? I could find no trace of a doctor of that name in Norfolk. Good heavens! what an awful thing if they should both be—be—adventuresses!"

He began walking up and down the room in excitement. After three or four turns, his eyes fell on the latest additions to Miss Dixon's collection of twigs and fir-cones, oak-apples and grasses, spread carefully out, as usual, on a couple of old chests, to be trimmed and dried.

"A lot of confounded rubbish!" muttered he.

A heavy old school-room inkstand which he sometimes used caught his eye. It was placed on the top of a pile of big books, evidently to press some flowers or leaves underneath.

"*My* inkstand!" he gasped. "She actually has the impertinence to meddle with my things for her wretched weeds!"

He snatched off the inkstand, upsetting some ink over one of his hands, banged it down on a table near, and began wiping his fingers with his handkerchief. And then he noticed something lying among the grasses. He picked it up and examined it curiously; it was a woman's glove: the longest he had ever seen; long enough to reach to the shoulder.

"Queer-looking thing off!" thought he, forgetting his anger in his amusement. "Though it looks very well on." And he stretched it upon his own arm to see the length of it. "What will women wear next! Fancy putting a pretty arm in a leather case, like a doll. It seems absurd; one would think it must look absurd. But I like those long gloves myself; at least I like them on her. I don't say I should like them on Mrs. Thornhill, or on ——"

He stopped short, even in his thoughts. Hastily taking the glove off his arm, he put it gently down again just as it had been before.

"I must not let her see that it has been touched. If she thinks her things are disturbed here, she'll take them away, and I might lose one of my best chances of meeting her here, and—and of finding out ——"

Again he stopped; but the idea of finding out anything against her, or of there being anything to find out, seemed to turn his whole

being to sickness. He put his lips to the glove. Was he in love with this girl? "No, no," answered his better reason. But his heart? That was not quite so ready with its answer.

He went softly out of doors, past the flower-beds, on to the plantation. It was dark among the trees there, and the tears that had gathered in his eyes were unseen. Godfrey Mayne pressed his troubled forehead against a cold and unsympathetic birch-tree, whispering forth a plaintive wail, "Oh, mother, mother!"

There was no consolation there, or anywhere. She was dead; she would never help or answer him again; and he, why, he was a very great simpleton. The only consolation he had was that nobody had seen him make such an exhibition of himself or suspected his weakness and his folly.

If his doubts of her could but be set at rest! For her own sake, he wished to respect her. For all Godfrey's cynicism and his French novel reading, he had the highest veneration for women—such women as his mother had trained him for. He could not give his ardent, devoted love—as love for Mary Dixon would have to be—to one who was not pure as untrodden snow.

He was not foolish enough to imagine there was no danger to him in her society. Everything about her was attractive. Her pale, fragile look, her strangely-varying beauty, her wayward moods, her sweet dark eyes, her glorious voice and the secrecy with which she hid its possession, the very mystery which hung over her—all combined to increase her charm.

But in that mystery lay the tormenting thorn which was piercing Godfrey Mayne.

CHAPTER XI.

QUARRELLING WITH ELSPETH.

Curious to say, although Godfrey Mayne had fully decided in his own mind that Miss Dixon's fascinations should never take serious hold of him, he yet found himself setting up a sort of rivalry with Ernest Underwood. Godfrey knew that he, himself, was the better-looking of the two—albeit he had never been guilty of considering his own personal attractions with much pride. Ernest had light eyelashes, a wide mouth, and a plain, unmeaning face. Godfrey's features were of the type called high-bred, his skin was clear and fair, and the colour of his hair, gold, would have certainly excited admiration had he been a girl. Ernest dressed well; he, Godfrey, generally went about in an old shooting-coat—in future he would get himself up too. He would rouse his spirit from its careless apathy, and ride and drive about, as he used to do before his mother's death took away his chief interest in life.

After breakfast, the morning following that which was spoken of in

the last chapter, Godfrey heard the voices of the Thornhill children at the door; they had come, with their governess, to fetch Miss Dixon for a walk. He threw down the book he had taken up, told Hawkins to have his own horse (which led a lazy life of it) saddled and brought round at once, and went upstairs to attire himself with care. Then he got off as fast as he could, before his father should hear the unaccustomed stir and come out to chaff him about his new activity.

At the end of the avenue, just before he reached the high-road, he passed Miss Dixon, the governess, and the children. He thought he noticed, as he raised his hat, that Mary Dixon looked surprised; but the astonishment of Arthur and Annette was more demonstratively expressed.

"Je ne savais pas que Godfrey pouvait monter à cheval!" cried Arthur.

"Comme son cheval est maigre!" said Annette.

These and similar comments in schoolroom French, Godfrey had the pleasure of hearing. He rode well. It was so unusual to see him on horseback, now, that his appearance excited some attention in Cheston. Mrs. Underwood met him and nodded to him; and that afternoon, when she was calling on the Thornhills, mentioned that she had seen him.

"And he looked very well, too," said she. "But I need not tell you that, for I suppose he called here in passing. That careful get-up was not meant to be wasted on the good people of Cheston, I am sure. It was to please somebody else," she added, archly.

But Elspeth blushed deeply, without smiling or looking up, and her mother answered, coldly: "He has not been here to-day."

"Well I must say he is improving," said Mrs. Underwood. "Your influence really has done wonders for him, Elspeth; he is getting quite dashing. Your little Elspeth"—turning to Mrs. Thornhill—"has transformed him into a smart-looking young fellow, who shows some interest in life, and whom any girl might take a fancy to."

"No, I have not done it," said Elspeth, with flashing eyes and crimson cheeks. "I don't think I have had anything to do with it. He does not come here much. He has been here but twice since he came home, and each time we have quarrelled. I will not see him if he comes to-day."

Mrs. Underwood laughed. She thought there had been some little lovers' quarrel, which, made up, would lead to greater love.

In spite of Elspeth's threat, when one of the younger ones ran in from the garden to say that Godfrey was coming across the meadow, she snatched up a book and sauntered out on the lawn: but she would not look up when he approached. He was in his brightest, most affectionate mood, and he put his arm round her and took the book away.

"This must be interesting reading," said he.

It was one of the children's lesson-books.

But Elspeth was altogether too much wounded and annoyed to laugh with a good grace and be kind to him.

"Take your hand away, please," she said; "the least touch crushes these light dresses."

He let his arm fall; but he would not retort disagreeably.

"Why, what is the matter, Elspeth? What have I done?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Then, don't you think you are treating me just a little hardly? You have not deigned to give me so much as a look yet. As for a kiss, I tremble to think of taking the liberty to ask for one."

"I dare say you can do without one."

Godfrey was beginning to get rather impatient. This was not pretty petulance at all; it was genuine sulking. "I dare say I can," was on his lips, but he was not so churlish as to say it. He bent down over her and tried to look into her cross little face, as he spoke.

"No, I can't at all. I don't know what's to happen if you will not let me kiss you in two seconds."

"You can if you like," said she uninvitingly.

And Godfrey availed himself of the ungracious permission, wondering what on earth could have made his gentle, yielding, silly little Elspeth so uncompromisingly rude and disagreeable. Her frowns made her look absolutely plain. The fact was that during those three weeks of his absence, Elspeth had been stirred up, by the unsatisfactory nature of his correspondence, and by Matilda's small sarcasms, into some show of spirit, and to think he was not as warm a lover as he ought to be. She was not old enough to know by experience the way to put right that something which was wrong, and her love for him was not strong enough for her to know it by instinct. So she threw away the opportunity his affectionate manner this afternoon gave her, and was intensely disagreeable.

Godfrey was not charmed into fresh devotion by this display of petulance, but his conscience was not quite free with regard to her; so he was forbearing, and took the kiss.

"And now it is all right again, isn't it?" he asked gently.

"No, it is not all right," she answered querulously. "How can it be all right when you only come and see me for ten minutes at a time, and spend all that in quarrelling; and then go away without even asking me to make it up?"

"Well, you know you quarrel too; I couldn't quarrel with you if you did not quarrel back: could I, my dear?"

"But you spoke yesterday as if you didn't care; and you went away as if you didn't care. You never said you were sorry at all."

"You don't know what up-hill work it is, saying you are sorry to a girl who keeps her back turned all the time, and won't even look at you," expostulated Godfrey.

If he had had more experience in love-making, or if he had been more deeply in earnest than he was, he would have known better

than to use the candid expression "uphill work" in speaking of any conversation with his lady-love. The words jarred even upon Elspeth's simple ears.

"Oh, if it is uphill work talking to me, you had better not talk," said she, turning away.

But Godfrey had seen the tears start to her eyes, and that disarmed him at once.

"Elspeth, my darling, how can you say such things! Do be a little reasonable. You know I like talking to you better than to anybody else in the world."

"Better than to Miss Dixon?" she asked, with a sudden flash of jealousy, turning upon him sharply.

Now, this was a very wicked thing to say, Godfrey thought; a thing so unreasonable, so unjust, so uncalled for! He drew his head up.

"If you are to be jealous of everyone I speak to, Elspeth, hadn't you better have nothing more to do with me?" he said stiffly. "Miss Dixon is a guest in my father's house. I may not forget the duties of hospitality, even to oblige you."

"Yes, you can remember all your duties except your duties to me," cried the silly child, bursting into sobs. "I have a right to expect a little more attention from a man who pre—pretends he wants to —wants to marry me. You said I was to have nothing more to do with you, so here's your—ring," and she drew off the little pearl and sapphire ornament and gave it him, with a gulping sob.

But this tragic action roused all Godfrey's tenderness. He forced back the little ring on to its finger, which she vainly tried to curl up in resistance, and caressed her and kissed her back to calmness and dry eyes. Then came the inevitable explanation.

"What on earth put it into your silly—your dear little head to be jealous of Miss Dixon?"

"Oh—h, I don't know. She is so pretty; at least people seem to think so; and she dresses so well, and I know you think a great deal of that; everybody seems to be in love with her and calls her charming. So I thought—I thought, when you only came to see me so seldom, it must be Miss Dixon who kept you away. But I know that she likes Ernest Underwood better than she does you."

"Of course, of course," interrupted Godfrey, hastily and impatiently. "It is the most absurd idea possible. I give you my word she is the last person in the whole world you need be jealous of."

He said this with all the conviction of the truth he thought himself to be speaking. Elspeth began to look brighter.

"You see," said she, "Mrs. Underwood came a little while ago, and she could talk of nothing but the improvement in you." Godfrey looked at her curiously. "She said that you were riding again, and were looking so nice and so well dressed, and she thought it must be

all through my influence. But I knew it was not mine. So I began thinking whose else it could be, and I supposed it must be Miss Dixon's."

"Well, I think people must be silly," remarked Godfrey with a light laugh. "It would hardly do to ride into Cheston in an old shooting-coat, would it? But it does not matter what a man wears when he is lounging about at home."

"Well, that's true," said Elspeth. "What should we think of Ernest Underwood if he drove over in an old coat? He is always dressed well: and very nice he looks."

"Oh, you think so too, do you?" said Godfrey, with perfect good-humour.

"Why, who else thinks so?" she asked quickly.

"Miss Dixon, of course. They are great friends."

"Miss Dixon does like gentlemen to dress well, then?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said he composedly. "I know she admires Ernest's tight boots and high collars; but I don't think she has eyes for anybody else."

The beautiful indifference with which he said this was satisfactory; and Elspeth was disarmed.

"I believe it is he I can see in your garden with her now," said she, straining her eyes to distinguish the figures under the Abbey walls. "I saw his dog-cart go by a little while ago."

She and Godfrey were in the Vicarage field, from which the avenue could just be seen.

"Oh, did you?" said he, with an indifference which was not quite real: for he began to ask mentally what business Ernest had to be so much about the Abbey. But his indifference suddenly disappeared as a big lumbering barouche was heard rumbling down the avenue, and he caught glimpses of it between the trunks of the birch-trees.

"Why that is the Hunts' old carriage?" he exclaimed. "I must be off then. I know my father would like me to be at home to receive Sir William. Good bye, dear."

Giving her a hasty kiss, Godfrey made for the Abbey. He very much wanted to see the meeting between Sir William Hunt and his step-mother. Ernest Underwood and Miss Dixon were at the back of the house and could not see the approach of the carriage. They were talking and laughing together, and her face was bright and smiling. Godfrey's face darkened.

It darkened still more—with a burst of sudden, unaccountable fury as he saw Ernest bend for her to fasten a pansy in his button-hole. She was playing with this feather-headed boy, for whom she certainly could not seriously care, in the most heartless manner. How dared she do it? Armed with a sense of duty to mankind, Godfrey walked towards these two, whom he looked upon as the hawk and its prey, who were evidently having so much pleasanter a tête-à-tête than the one he himself had just enjoyed. He could hardly greet the

young fellow with civility. Ernest had been already on the point of departure, and began walking round to the front of the house where his adored dog-cart was waiting, Miss Dixon accompanying him.

"Hallo, I think I know that old caravan," said he, when he caught sight of the barouche standing at the gate. "That is celebrated in history as the largest conveyance, not an omnibus, that ever was built, Miss Dixon. If Sir William and his wife were to sit on opposite seats, they wouldn't be able to see each other."

"Sir William—who is it?" she asked quickly: and Godfrey saw her change colour.

"Sir William Hunt. Haven't you seen him yet?"

"No," faltered Mary, as she laid her hand upon her heart as if to still its pulses.

"Well, when you do, you'll like him. He is a dear old boy, and his conversation will send you to sleep quicker than anything I know. The Vicar on Sunday isn't in it with Sir William."

With this, Ernest took an effusive farewell of her, and a less prolonged one of Godfrey, and drove off.

"Will you come into the drawing-room now, and see Sir William?" asked Godfrey, watching her keenly. "Mrs. Mayne will want you with her."

"Is—is mamma there?" she questioned, turning whiter than death.

Before Godfrey could answer, the footman, William, approached, saying that his mistress wished Miss Dixon to join her in the drawing-room. She obeyed at once. Godfrey followed, wondering. Had he been suspecting a mystery where none existed? Or was he going to witness a sensational meeting?

This last supposition proved to be very far from the truth. For though Miss Dixon's sensitive cheek had not recovered its colour, she was perfectly calm and self-possessed as her mother introduced her to Lady Hunt; a pretty, artistically-preserved and vivacious little lady, who looked ten years younger than her real age of forty-four.

But Sir William Hunt was not there.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE ABBEY FARM.

Lady Hunt was charmed with Miss Dixon's grace and prettiness, and bewailed to Mrs. Mayne her own fate in never having had a daughter.

"I have absolutely no companion," said she, with a little affected sigh. "Sir William really does not count at all. He is very good in moving about when I want change; but, when we are settled in any place, I have to depend upon myself, as he hates amusements. He likes the largest books he can find, and collections of curiosities, and stuffed things, like Sir Thomas in the legend; only I am worse

off than the Lady Jane, for I haven't even a cousin," she concluded, with a little laugh at her own pleasantry.

"You move about a good deal, then?" replied Mrs. Mayne.

"Yes: I need it. My spirits have been wretchedly low at times since the death of my eldest son. It was a terrible affair. I cannot bear to talk about it."

Her agitation affected sensitive Mrs. Mayne at once. "No, no; pray do not talk about it—if it distresses you so much. I am sure it must."

"It does indeed. And the worst of it is, my husband is constantly referring to it before me. It has never been cleared up, you see; and he is always hoping to do it. The two boys I have left are both away, one at Cambridge and one at Sandhurst. So that I really die of dulness at Goule."

"When did you come to it?"

"About a week ago."

"A week!" repeated Mrs. Mayne, unable to suppress her surprise: for she had thought it was only a day or two.

"Yes, but I have not been well; and my husband was not well, either—we both had bad colds. He went into Cheston most days, but did not feel up to calling anywhere."

Mrs. Mayne fell into a passing reverie. She had gone several times into Cheston herself during the past week. "You will not be staying here long?" she questioned.

"Oh no. We shall go to London for a few weeks, I expect, when we leave, and then on to Cannes for the winter. I dare not propose Italy; Sir William hates the very name," added she, lowering her voice, as if approaching a painful subject.

When she rose to leave, Godfrey attended her to the carriage. But no sooner was the drawing-room door closed behind them than she turned to him, dropping her voice to a mysterious key.

"Do you know, Mr. Godfrey, my husband thinks he has at last found a clue to trace the people who killed poor William!"

"Indeed!" replied Godfrey. "When? Where?"

"I cannot tell you that. I am not supposed to know anything about it; Sir William thinks I am not fit to be trusted with a secret, I believe. But what he doesn't choose to tell me I generally manage to find out, and I know this: that since we came here he has seen accidentally one of those persons who were mixed up in it, and who escaped; and he sat down and wrote off at once to Scotland Yard. I wish he wouldn't do these things," she continued, with a plaintive shrug of annoyance. "Waking up such terrible memories, when nothing can bring our poor boy to life again! And we shall have the house full of detectives and policemen! And, if anything comes of their search, and the people are at last caught, why there—there will be a public trial!—and oh, that would be dreadful."

"To you no doubt it would," said Godfrey, with feeling. He spoke

some words of earnest sympathy as he placed her in the carriage: and Lady Hunt drove away.

Left alone in the drawing-room, Mrs. Mayne motioned her daughter to the sofa and drew her down beside her. Her hands were trembling.

"Mary, do you know that Godfrey was watching you?" she whispered tremulously. "Watching us both, I think."

"Yes, I know. But he did not see anything. I was prepared. I know he is playing the spy."

"What a dreadful thing! What can have given rise to suspicion in his mind?" went on Mrs. Mayne, with agitation. "Mary, you must turn his doubts away. You can if you will."

"How?" asked the girl, coldly.

"He is very impressionable; and you might make him so much attached to you, that ——"

"That I might lay his doubts to rest against his will? And what of Elspeth?"

"Oh dear, I don't mean in *that* way—that he should fall in love with you," bewailed poor Mrs. Mayne. "You will not understand."

"I understand only too well, mamma. It is you, I fear, who do not. Godfrey is not what you think him; cold and passionless. He will love with the most impassioned ardour, once his love is awakened: and, rely upon it, it has not been by that silly child, Elspeth. No, no; I should dread awaking *that* in him more than anything. Let the worst come, rather than that. Why, mamma," resumed the girl, her voice trembling with emotion, "remember what reason I have to dread the very word love: and then ask me, if you dare, to excite it again, and of my own free will; you know I would rather die."

"Then Godfrey will find out everything," said Mrs. Mayne. "We shall be cast out on the world again, and the peace I thought I had found at last will be over."

"Do you call this peace! This eternal dread of discovery; this trembling at every knock; this shrinking away from chance visitors? Why, it is worse, a thousand times, than our restless wandering about was. Poor dear mamma, poor dear, gentle mamma," she moaned, with a sudden burst of tenderness, as she put her arms round her mother's neck. "I am so sorry for you—tortured by this new fear when you thought you were at last resting. It would almost be better to confess; to—to—tell everything."

Her mother pushed her violently away, shuddering from head to foot. "Are you mad, Mary? Oh, not for the world. Oh, promise that you will not, for it would be madness. Promise, promise!"

"I promise," said the girl, bitterly. "With my whole life ruined, a few more useless falsehoods, a few more acted deceptions cannot matter much."

"How hard, how cruel you are!" sobbed Mrs. Mayne.

The girl looked at her with a searching, pathetic expression, the

meaning of which her mother could not read. For it told of hopeless inability of the better nature to get even sympathy for its far heavier burden from the other one. Hard!

"I am sorry if I seem harsh," said she gently. "And I will try, mamma, in some harmless way, to dispel Godfrey's doubts."

The following day an invitation came for a dinner at Goule Park: for Mr. and Mrs. Mayne, Mr. Godfrey Mayne, and Miss Dixon. Mrs. Mayne turned the note about in her hand and cast a nervous glance at her daughter.

"I am glad," said Mary, lightly. "I like Lady Hunt. Shall we all go, Mr. Mayne?"

"Why, of course," he answered.

"Very solemn feasts, those Goule banquets are," remarked Godfrey. "Parsons to right of you, parsons to left of you, and the game never properly hung. I hope you will find in it the pleasure you anticipate, Miss Dixon."

"I hope I shall. I am longing to see Sir Thomas and the Lady Jane together."

So the invitation to the Park was accepted.

In the meantime, Godfrey began putting in practice his theory of getting used to the charms of the dangerous Miss Dixon, in order that he might lay hold of some clue to the mystery concerning her past life. As if to further his scheme, the unconscious defendant met him half way.

On this day, the day that the invitation had come for the dinner-party, she asked him, rather hesitatingly, if he would mind changing a book for her at Cheston, when she heard him say, in his new character of dashing whip and daring rider, that he was about to drive thither.

"With pleasure," he replied. "What shall I get you?"

"I don't quite know. Anything that looks nice."

"And am I to judge by the cover, or the title, or ——?"

"Oh, yes, any of your usual modes of judging of a book's value."

"Then I think I will not get one at all. But if you and Mrs. Mayne will trust to my driving—you know Ernest admits that I am careful—I will take you both to Cheston and you can choose for yourself."

Mrs. Mayne did not refuse. They started in the waggonette that afternoon, Mary Dixon sitting in front by Godfrey's side. She was in a malicious humour, and piqued him by pretending to be very nervous about his driving, while she let him see by the twinkle in her soft bright eyes and the twitching of her mouth, that it was mischief and not fear that moved her. He hardly knew whether to laugh or to be really annoyed, until she said gravely:

"You had better let me take the reins now; there's something coming."

This was too much and he drew himself up. Yet it was a remark he would have laughed at from other people.

"I think, if you really could not trust to my keeping clear of a straw-waggon, it was rather unwise of you to come at all, Miss Dixon."

"I think it was," said she at once. "When we come back I'll sit inside, and then I can get under the seat and shut my eyes when I see the smash coming."

He was obliged to laugh, though he was still much more annoyed than amused, and he spoke rather stiffly for the rest of the drive into Cheston. However, when for the return, Miss Dixon attempted to get in behind with her mother, he very naturally protested; and handed her to her old place by his side.

"That was very unkind of you," said he, when they had started.

"Well, I thought if we went on at the rate we were going, you and I should hardly be content with mere abuse by the end of the journey."

"I beg your pardon; I am sorry to have been rude. But one doesn't like to be thought quite a muff."

"And my tongue ran away with me altogether: as it generally does if I let my conversation go beyond the quakers' 'Yea, yea,' and 'Nay, nay.' However, I can make amends now:" and she pursed up her mouth as if for prolonged silence.

"Look here," cried he: "I will overlook the past and allow you to speak fluently, on condition that you say nothing but nice things all the way back."

"Thank you. I was longing for an opportunity of complimenting you on your excellent dri——"

"That will do, Miss Dixon. Keep to generalities."

But there was a suspicion of malice in a good many more of the remarks she made before they reached the Abbey.

Godfrey did not know, as he thought the matter over on his return, whether he had enjoyed that drive or not.

On the following afternoon, Godfrey was in his own room, when he saw Sir William Hunt ride up, leave his horse with the groom, and approach the front door. Knowing that his father was out, Godfrey at once went down. At the head of the staircase he met his step-mother gliding noiselessly up. She was looking white and scared.

"Are you not well?" asked Godfrey.

"The most dreadful headache came on after my hearty lunch," she murmured, "and I—I think visitors are coming in: I heard the bell. Colonel Underwood, I dare say—and I'm sure I can't talk to him—and Mary's gone to the Vicarage, and all. It is very tiresome."

"It is Sir William Hunt," replied Godfrey.

"Oh dear, what a pity!—and I have not seen him yet. You must be good enough to receive him, Godfrey. Don't—*please* don't say I am at home. Let him think I am out driving, or walking, or—or anything."

Godfrey went down. But the conviction lay upon him that it was Sir William Hunt who had startled his step-mother and taken the

colour from her plump cheeks, not the hearty lunch. And he marvelled greatly what Sir William had done in the past to Mrs. and Miss Dixon, or what they had done to him.

Some days went on. Godfrey pursued the task he had set himself —that of studying Mary Dixon. And little by little it came about that in the active use of the means the end was lost sight of; and though Godfrey was methodical enough to ask himself each evening what progress his investigations had made, he was never able to say that he had made very important discoveries—from the detective's point of view. He had indeed found out that novels with a strong dash of romance in them shared her affection with the works of Thackeray and George Eliot; that Tennyson was her favourite poet, and that she knew pages of his poems by heart; that she confessed that her besetting sin was love of dress; that she knew more about the standard literature of France, Germany and Italy than he did about that of his native land; that she could play billiards and didn't care for lawn-tennis; that her eyes were quite a different colour on a sunny day from what they were when the sky was clouded; that she had all the little capricious pretty woman's wants that he was delighted to satisfy, and that his theory, of resisting the effect of her charms by studying and getting used to them, was all wrong.

It was so easy to talk to her; he had fallen so naturally into the habit of small attentions such as he had been used in her lifetime to pay to his mother; never to anyone else until now. And it was not until one day when the accidental touch of her hand, as they both tried to catch a ball of wool that was rolling off her lap, seemed to strike in a moment his very soul into fire, that he woke to his danger. He started up without daring to look at her, and walked to the farthest window. Miss Dixon glanced up from her work in surprise; and he had restored the ball so clumsily that it rolled back again half-way across the room.

"What is the matter, Mr. Godfrey? Neuralgia again?"

"No. At least, yes; yes, I think it is," he said, as he went out by the French window into the garden.

She laughed. Neuralgia is a very painful thing, but it need not make people behave as if they were out of their wits. The truth never occurred to her. During the last ten days, in which she had intentionally seen more of him, her fear of a possibly passionate Godfrey had been entirely lost in a new and careless liking for the cool and attentive Godfrey.

It is difficult to imagine smouldering fire, heroic devotion, or any attributes of that sort in a harmless gentleman who takes a simple pleasure in sorting one's filoselle or in choosing one a good pen. These actions may indeed be made loverlike; but Godfrey seemed so evidently to like trifling for trifling's sake, that she laughed at him and never thought Elspeth need be jealous. He complained one day that Elspeth did not provide him with these little employ ents.

"Of course not," said Mary. "She wants you to go out to win a fortune for her, not to pick up her pins."

She congratulated herself upon having conciliated him just enough, and the suspicions, which she had indeed lulled to rest, she hoped she had killed.

But on this afternoon when his security had been suddenly destroyed, Godfrey shut himself into his room in a fever. He could not blind himself now, as he lay wrestling with his mad longing to feel her arms about his neck, her head against his breast. He knew that he loved her. He thought she was the only woman he ever, under any circumstances, could have loved with the intensity of the passion which burnt within him. Oh, if he could only have known her before he bound himself to Elspeth! What a weak man he had been to let himself be driven into that; or to imagine for a moment that the feeling he had for her pretty little doll's face was love! And now what was he to do?

The answer to this question came in the sound of the dinner-bell. He was very quiet that evening; neuralgia was an excuse for that.

Mary was sorry for him; he looked haggard and ill. He had been so kind lately; she had got used to him as a companion through the evenings, which would have been dull but for trifling wrangles with him on all subjects within their ken or without it, from Schopenhauer's philosophy to the right way of threading a wool-needle. But on this evening Godfrey went out into the garden as soon as dinner was over and wandered about by himself. Presently he heard a light step behind him and Mary Dixon held out his hat.

"You are silly to come out without your hat when you have neuralgia," she said severely. "You will have it worse than ever to-night."

"I dare say I shall," replied he. "But it is very kind of you to think of it."

"Why, so it is; but perhaps I shouldn't have thought of it quite so quickly had it not been that they are playing at cribbage indoors and not taking the slightest notice of me. I've come out in search of sympathy and attention."

But he could not answer in their usual style of badinage; her light words stirred a deeper feeling within him now. However, she put it all down to neuralgia; and they walked about together and watched the swallows flying. Even this harmless amusement woke mournful thoughts in Godfrey.

"We have not had half as many swallows' nests as usual about the place this year," he remarked in a tone of complaint.

"Well, what of that?"

"Why, don't you know the old superstition—that one must not expect any good luck or happiness if the swallows go away?"

"Do they say that?" she asked in a low voice. "Then, mamma

and I—but it is only a silly superstition," she broke off quickly. "You don't believe in it, do you?"

"I'm not sure. We are all superstitious in Lancashire. There are stories about every stone and every tree. All the wells were holy once, and all the old houses are haunted."

"The Abbey is not haunted."

"No, not exactly; but there's a story about it."

"Go on. What is it?"

"Well, tradition says that a monk was bricked up in the wall of his cell once; and that bit of the wall is still standing. It is said that if anyone who has committed a crime stands looking at that wall by himself for half an hour in the twilight, he sees the dead monk, and, in spite of all his efforts, cannot help uttering a scream."

"What a silly story," she exclaimed. "Why, if anyone were to stare by himself at dusk at any wall, after being told that, of course he would scream if he were superstitious to begin with."

"Of course. That's the point of the story. And it wouldn't matter whether he was superstitious or not."

"Oh yes, it would. Terror is the result of nervousness, or ignorance, and the scream would prove the weakness of his mind, not the wickedness of his life."

"That is all very well; but if you or I, who are not particularly ignorant or superstitious, were made to stand staring at that wall under those conditions, we should feel jolly uncomfortable, and it would only need some clever trick to make us shriek like demons."

"Oh, what nonsense! Why, you would be prepared for a trick. I could sleep in the room without its having the least effect upon me. I will, too," said she, with spirit.

"Only it doesn't happen to be a bed-room, and it doesn't happen to be in our house at all. It is the inner wall of the Wildings' best sitting-room."

"Well, it is twilight now. I'll get Nancy to let me in, and she shall stand outside with you and see that you don't play me any ricks."

"All right," he agreed: and they started off through the plantation, round to the farmhouse, in some small excitement. Mary evidently got rather nervous as they came up to the door; not indeed with superstitious terror, but at the request they were going to make.

"Will they like it, Mr. Godfrey?" she asked in a low voice.

"Nancy won't mind," he answered: "but we must not let it get to Mrs. Wilding's ears. She generally has a lodger in the summer, one is there now, I believe, and it wouldn't do for it to be said that her house was haunted. So I hope to goodness you won't scream."

Mary laughed. "Why do they take a lodger?"

"Well, they are not particularly rich—it is only in summer they do it. It is an artist who is with them now, I hear. I've not seen him: he came only a few days ago."

Nancy opened the door to them and entered with glee into the fun, which they imparted to her in a whisper. She was at home alone, she said; even the maid-servant was gone out on an errand.

"It's all right; you can come in, Miss Dixon," said she good-humouredly. "We did a deal of screaming in that room when we were children: but I think the wicked monk was generally *you*, Master Godfrey; good substantial thumps you gave us all too, for a ghost's. How poor Master Charlie used to enjoy it!—though he got his share of the thumps as well as we."

"How is it you are at home by yourself, Nancy?" asked Godfrey.

"My father and mother are at the Cairds' at Cheston this evening: and Dick is out with Mr. Cattermole."

"Cattermole? Who's he?—oh, your artist lodger, I suppose?"

"An artist he calls himself, but he is fonder of his pipe than of his paint-box. He takes up too much of my time with his chaff and his questions about the people and the place. And oh! the things I tell him!" cried Nancy, with twinkling eyes. "He has been writing letters to-day, and he is gone over to Cheston to post them: he never trusts anybody to do that. So the room is quite at your service and the ghost's, Miss Dixon."

They all went in together. It was rather a small room, with a low ceiling and a wide window. It lay in that part of the farm which jutted out from the main building of the Abbey as it stood at present, and was built into a corner of the original walls. In its stiff "gentility," the room formed a cold contrast to the general sitting-room occupied by the family, which was lofty, well lighted, homely and cheerful. It was called the best room, and was rarely used by the Wildings themselves. The mahogany tables were polished to brightness, the horsehair chairs and sofa were substantial, the walls held pictures. The room just now smelt of tobacco; on the centre table lay the open blotting-case, pens and paper which the lodger had been using, and some dirty newspapers crowded the side-tables.

"I'm sure it will be worth something to live in this atmosphere for half an hour!" cried Miss Dixon. "And what am I to get as a reward if I don't scream?"

"Oh, you want that, do you!" laughed Godfrey. "Then the tortures of the rack wouldn't make you cry out. Well, I don't mind promising you a pair of gloves if we hear no sound during the half hour. Now please stand here," he added, placing her at the end of the room with her face turned towards the wall over the small table of carved mahogany on the right-hand side of the fireplace. "And keep your eyes fixed on the centre flower on the wall-paper just above the tea-caddy. It now wants five-and-twenty minutes to nine," said he, looking at his watch. "I shall hear you scream at five minutes past nine exactly."

"I take sixes, Mr. Godfrey, in Swedish kid mousquetaire," she

called out laughingly, as he withdrew with Nancy and shut her in, after throwing open the window as far as he could to let out the smell of tobacco and to hear the scream better, as he told her. They left her standing by the table in the middle of the room, supporting herself on it with one hand.

He and Nancy went into the other room, where the latter began leisurely laying the cloth for supper. Upsetting the cat out of Mrs. Wilding's arm-chair, Godfrey took his seat in it and looked on.

"You won't win your bet from her, Master Godfrey," said she shrewdly, when the supper was laid and the time getting on. "And may-be you don't want to. You will have to give the gloves."

Godfrey started. This young woman's keen eyes saw more than was needful.

"You mind your own business, Nancy," said he, quietly.

He was sitting with his back to the very little light that still came through the windows. The fire was low. Nancy broke up the coals into a blaze, and fixed her eyes searchingly upon her companion. He moved restlessly, got up, walked to the end of the room, and then came back again. She was standing still.

"What did you mean by that?" said he.

"Why, I mean—that lookers-on see most of the game, Master Godfrey: and when they see a player going to make a false move, why—what should they do then?"

The fire-light shone upon her kindly, clever face as she bent forward and asked this question with grave, deliberate earnestness.

"Don't ask me any riddles," said Godfrey, sharply. "If you have anything to say, speak out."

"Do you remember how I used to lecture you when you were a lad, Master Godfrey? There was not above a year or two between us, but I was taller and bigger than you were. Well, I suppose I want to lecture still, sir—and I hope you'll hear me. You are forgetting, I fear, that you are promised to the young lady at the Vicarage: but, Master Godfrey, there'll be a reckoning such as you don't dream of, unless you keep true to her."

"Hold your tongue, Nancy. Are you in your senses?"

"Yes; but you are losing yours as fast as a man can. Keep still, sir," she said, as he half sprang out of the chair. "I have a liking for that sweet little lady in there," nodding towards the other room. "I don't think she's happy. But I've a liking for you too, Master Godfrey; and I tell you that her dark eyes may have done more mischief than she can undo in a life-time—and if you let them bewitch you, you may perhaps say good-bye to happiness for the rest of your days."

"You are taking an unwarrantable liberty," said Godfrey, trying to speak carelessly. "I should like to know what has put this nonsense about Miss Dixon —— What's that?" he broke off, starting to his feet.

"It's only Dick calling to me," replied she; and hastened to the front door in answer to her brother's excited cries.

Godfrey followed, having looked at his watch and found that in two minutes more the half-hour of Mary Dixon's trial would be over. Dick was looking in at the sitting-room window with wide eyes.

"Come away, Dick," said his sister, enforcing her injunction by laying a strong hand upon his shoulder. "Miss Dixon is in there."

"No, she isn't; no, she isn't," said Dick, excitedly. "The monk's got her, the bad monk's got her. I saw it in her face. She seized the table to try to save herself—but when she looked up, I saw it in her face!"

Godfrey heard all this as he stood in the passage with his watch in his hand; the front-door was open, but it was so dark now that he could scarcely see the time. Dick's wild words alarmed him; he thrust his watch back into his pocket and opened the door of the sitting-room.

No one was there. He stepped in quickly and gave a searching glance round the room. Nothing looked disturbed, except that the blotting-book lay on the floor. As he stooped to pick it up, he heard the faintest little gasp behind him. Turning, he raised the deep cover of the table that was underneath the window, and found Mary Dixon crouching under it, with her hands before her face. She seemed to be hiding from some terrific sight.

"Oh, don't, don't!" she gasped, without looking up, as his hand touched her. "I will come; yes, I know I must come! But wait, wait."

"Miss Dixon!" exclaimed Godfrey.

She quivered at the sound of his voice, raised her head, and seized his hand with cold, trembling fingers.

"Oh, thank heaven!" she moaned, clinging to him for protection. "Take me away; take me away!"

Godfrey helped her to come out of her hiding-place. She was frightfully agitated, and seemed to be clenching something tightly in her right hand: but all Godfrey could see was a piece of pink blotting-paper.

"Let us get back to the Abbey!" she gasped.

Godfrey was supporting her from the room when Dick, no longer restrained by Nancy, came up, and flew at Godfrey in a tempest of rage.

"Let her go!" he cried; "what have you done to her? Let her go. You are the devil."

Godfrey pushed Dick off with his disengaged arm; Nancy advanced and seized him. The lad was not very strong, and the touch of his sister's hands always acted upon him as some soothing magic. But he kept muttering threats after Godfrey in an undertone, evidently believing that he had done some harm to Miss Dixon.

Godfrey, bending anxiously over the still trembling girl, led her out into the gathering night. Nancy looked after them with a troubled gaze. Mary, clinging almost convulsively to her protector, was not yet quite mistress of herself, for she kept glancing fearfully right and left in the darkness.

"You see I was frightened, after all," she said, trying to speak lightly, as they passed through the little gate to the plantation. "Just at the last I thought I did see the monk. But I didn't scream. I did not scream, did I?" she added in hesitating enquiry.

"No, you did not scream, and you have won the gloves," said Godfrey in a low voice. His whole heart went out to this fragile, trembling girl who was leaning on his arm and looking up into his face like a questioning child. The hot words which were bubbling up to his lips must have found utterance, if some sounds from the lane behind them had not made her break away from him in terror.

"It is only Mr. Wilding; I know his voice; and some other man —their lodger, most likely," explained Godfrey re-assuringly.

But she was listening with a strained intentness to the voices, which only came faintly through the trees as the speakers passed on. They ceased altogether as the farm-yard gate creaked on its hinges, proving Godfrey to be right. He gently drew her hand through his arm.

"You will not say anything to mamma—*ever?*" she whispered.

"Certainly not," he replied, looking down at her pleading eyes. "*We* will say nothing at all about our adventure, and you shall retain your character for fearless courage. I would keep a heavier secret than that for you," he whispered tenderly.

Mr. and Mrs. Mayne were still at cribbage. Mary asked Godfrey to say she was tired and had gone to bed. She shook hands with him at the foot of the staircase, softly thanking him for his kindness.

"Try and get a good night's rest, Miss Dixon, that you may be fresh and bright for the dinner-party to-morrow."

"Dinner-party! Oh, yes," said she, with a shiver. "Good-night."

She locked herself into the school-room, glanced to see that the window blinds were drawn down, lit the two candles on the mantel-piece, and then slowly opened her clenched right hand, smoothed out the piece of blotting-paper it contained, and held it up before the looking-glass. She gazed at it fixedly for a few moments, studying the marks upon it; then, apparently coming to some decisive conclusion, she tore the paper to pieces and burnt them one by one in the candle, before passing into her chamber.

But the expression of her sad brown eyes, as she did so, was that of the hare when the cruel hounds are upon her.

(To be continued.)

A DANGEROUS CROSSING.

BY LADY VIRGINIA SANDARS.

IT was a cold, raw afternoon, between four and five o'clock, towards the end of November. A fog was creeping up from the city, and a drizzling, sleety rain, falling at intervals, made walking not only odious, but at times positively dangerous: especially where, in the rapidly advancing darkness and murky atmosphere, crossings had to be encountered.

It was an afternoon to cause the most rabid pleasure-seeker to remain at home; or, if a man, to send him as rapidly as hansom could travel to the selfish luxury of his club. And yet, on such an afternoon, Myra Graham, a young girl of singularly modest and dignified appearance, was to be seen shivering at Hyde Park corner, watching with a nervous, anxious face, a secure opportunity to get safely across to Grosvenor Place. She had on a long waterproof, which scarcely concealed her graceful figure. On her arm was a basket, and with her disengaged hand she strove to shelter herself from the bitter wind with her umbrella.

The girl was marvellously pretty. The cold had certainly reddened the tip of her little nose, but it had also intensified the colour on her cheeks, thereby adding brilliancy to her beautiful hazel eyes. She had thrown back her veil to enable her to see better through the fog and gloom, thus allowing the passers-by to observe her lovely face; but all were too much engaged in their efforts to get out of the fog to pay her any attention.

The early training of misfortune and poverty had combined to make Myra singularly independent and self-reliant. Alone and fearless she walked from one end of London to the other, her vocation obliging her to do so. But oh, these crossings! no length of time or habit could overcome the nervous tremors with which they inspired her. She had now been standing for at least ten minutes unable to make up her mind to move. What this particular crossing cost her, not only in positive terror, but in money, and what represented money to her, time, was only known to herself. On this evening, notwithstanding the wretched weather, she had made a solemn vow to take neither cab nor omnibus; the small sum thus saved was to be devoted to a better purpose.

Poor girl! hers was indeed an act of self-denial. Sometimes the policeman helped her over her difficulties, but in vain she looked round this afternoon; he was not to be seen. There was an unusual throng of vehicles of all sorts passing and repassing, for it was Lord Mayor's day, and this had increased both the traffic and Myra's terrors. Two or three times already she had made a bound forward,

and then a hasty retreat back, as a threatening pole seemed bent on spitting her.

The lamp-post, which marks where Piccadilly ends and Knightsbridge commences, was now lit, and seemed to give her a smile of encouragement. She always regarded it as an oasis in the desert of her difficulties, and longed now to find herself beneath its friendly shelter. In mournful soliloquy she whispered, "Oh, Myra, how silly you are! You can't stand shivering here all night." And once more she craned her graceful neck and peered through the rapidly increasing darkness.

"Ah, there he is!" she exclaimed, joyfully, and almost inaudibly. "Now for it."

She lifted up her long waterproof, put down her umbrella, gave one hasty and terrified glance to the right and left, and then all but sprang across. So rapid and impetuous were her movements, that she not only landed safely under the lamp-post, but into the arms of a tall, and singularly aristocratic young man—no less a person than Lord Wargrave. Staggering back from the collision, he exclaimed:

"Hulloa! young lady, pray restrain your ardour!"

"Oh! I beg your pardon," she answered, meekly, panting for breath. "I took you for the policeman." At which strange reply he burst out laughing.

"May I ask why you favour the police so particularly?" he enquired, good-humouredly. The darkness had as yet prevented him from seeing her face, but turning towards the full glare of the lamp, his gaze fell upon it. He started at the beauty it revealed. She fixed her large eyes gravely upon him, and answered with quiet dignity:

"I am terribly afraid of all crossings, but especially of this one, and in this fog; and sometimes the policeman helps me over." Then more to herself than to him, she added, nervously: "I wonder where he is to-night?"

Her voice was singularly low and sweet; the voice of a lady. The instant Lord Wargrave heard it he recognised her as one, and felt she might deem any offer of aid an impertinence. But her distress was so unmistakable, and she was so wonderfully pretty, he thought he would hazard it. "In his absence will you allow me to supply his place?" he said, with some hesitation, and held out his arm.

Myra was on the point of refusing; but it was late, and this, combined with her fears, overcame her usual reticent prudence. This young man's manner was so respectfully kind, he could mean her no harm. She gazed up at him with a timid glance that touched him deeply, so young and innocent did she look, and so unprotected. He gave her an encouraging smile which decided her, and laying her hand lightly on his outstretched arm, she replied in a low voice:

"Will you be so very good?"

Another moment and they were launched through the sea of lurid

obscurity before them. She clung with such tenacity to his protecting arm, that he had almost to drag her across. Her fears were very real, was his thought as he deposited her in safety at the corner of Grosvenor Place, where, lifting his hat, he bid her good-evening. Thanking him, she hurried away. Now that the danger was over, she felt ashamed of her cowardice, and annoyed that it had impelled her to accept the aid of a stranger. He watched her retreating figure for a moment, thinking how sad it was that one so young and lovely should be out alone on such a night. "Fancy Flo in a similar position!" he mentally ejaculated, as he slowly retraced his steps.

Arriving again at the lamp-post, some sudden change came over the spirit of his mind, for he quickly recrossed, and followed Myra with rapid steps, muttering to himself: "Poor girl! she may get into another difficulty in this confounded fog!"

Had Myra been middle-aged, and plain, it is doubtful whether Lord Wargrave's philanthropy would have carried him out of his way in such weather. Be this as it may, he had certainly decided in his own mind that it would be unworthy of a Christian to allow this young girl to face the further perils of the fog alone; he might be of use to her. And then what innocent appealing eyes she had! It would do him good to look into them again.

So thinking, he soon overtook her, but, unfortunately, any excuse he might have framed in his own mind for following the young girl most provokingly failed him in Grosvenor Place. As is not unusual, the fog was but partial, and the atmosphere in this more favoured region was comparatively clear. However, so sudden an interest had sprung up within him as regarded Myra that he felt constrained to follow her, in hopes that something might occur which would authorise him to again offer her assistance. He had not the most remote idea of annoying her, but his curiosity was aroused by her evident independence, combined with so much beauty and timidity.

Suddenly some mysterious instinct caused Myra to look back. She felt she was being followed. A shade of disappointment more than of anger passed over her face, as she recognised him whom she now thought she had imprudently trusted. She drew down her veil, and hastened her walk, trusting that her manner would sufficiently indicate her wish for solitude. "After all," she thought, "I have gone through it before; but I fancied he was different." And giving him no further thought, she went rather sadly on.

Arriving at those humbler houses which lie between their grander neighbours in Grosvenor Place and Victoria Street, she delayed a moment at a small flower shop, where she looked with longing eyes at the fragrant bunches of violets temptingly displayed in the window. The girl standing at the door held one out to her.

"Not to night, Ellen. I cannot afford it, so don't tempt me. But," she added, stooping down, and smiling, "you do not charge for smelling them."

She buried her face in the violets for an instant, and then passed on into the next shop, a stationer's, where she had a few purchases to make.

Lord Wargrave, still following her, but at a discreet distance, had observed this little episode. As Myra disappeared in the stationer's he made a bound forward, hastily picked up the largest bunch of violets he could find, threw half-a-crown on the counter, and without waiting for change, took his stand outside the stationer's, from whence he could see Myra without being seen. Would he dare offer her these violets? She must be very poor to refuse herself so small a luxury. What a pleasure to give them to her, and see her eyes light up with gratitude. But would they do so? They might, on the contrary, flash with resentment, and he would grieve to offend her.

While he was thus cogitating, Myra reappeared, and Lord Wargrave finding himself face to face with her, on the spur of the moment dropped the violets into her little basket. He had no sooner done so than he repented. She drew back quickly and haughtily, for she had no idea he was still following her.

"Pray accept them," he said, eagerly. "You seem so fond of flowers." Their eyes met, his were deprecating, hers flashed ominously. She took the violets out of her basket, and holding them out to him said, with quiet dignity:

"Had I wanted flowers I had money to buy them with; may I request you to follow me no farther." And almost before she had done speaking, forgetful of her fears, she had crossed the street.

Lord Wargrave remained standing where she had left him, looking uncommonly foolish, violets in hand. His conscience told him that, after all, a young girl having confided herself to him in momentary fear of her life, had given him no right either to follow her or offer her flowers. He had been betrayed by his Quixotic character into an error in judgment which, seeing the annoyance it had given, he bitterly repented. Liberal in politics, he was conservative in the highest degree in all social relations of life. Lord Wargrave had never had the most passing flirtation out of his own sphere. Brought up by a woman whom he both loved and respected, she had inspired him with a courteous respect for all womanhood, and a tender pity for those who, unprotected, have to face daily trial and temptation.

It therefore nettled him considerably that Myra should have so evidently looked upon his offer of the violets as an impertinence. After all, what was it to him if she was run over? "Serve her right," he said, under his breath, "for being so suspicious." But a softer feeling came over him as he thought how much this lovely girl must have encountered in her lonely walks to make her mistrustful. Anyhow, he would give her no further cause to think him intrusive. But one way home was as good as another. He was originally walking for an appetite, not yet obtained. To go round by Westminster would lengthen his walk. It was not a pleasant evening to be out, certainly,

but it was well to harden oneself. And he hated clubs, though the frost which had put a stop to hunting had filled them with his friends.

Having thus decided what to do, he pursued his way on the opposite side to Myra; she could find no fault with that.

And yet she did, for as she walked rapidly on in bitterness of spirit, she cast a hasty glance across the street, and seeing him whom she now considered an enemy, as she thought, still on her track, she sorrowfully wished she was middle-aged or ugly; it would save her a great deal of bother. It was beginning to snow again, and with a shiver, she wrapped her cloak closer round her shapely figure.

Suddenly Myra was arrested by a wretched woman, thinly-clad, with a baby in her arms, and an attenuated atom of humanity clinging to her ragged skirts.

"Lydia, is that you?" exclaimed the girl. "What a night to bring those poor children out! You promised not to do so again ——"

"Ah, Miss! what can I do? I dursn't leave them at home. He came home last night worse than ever for the drink, and beat Jim dreadful bad whilst I was away."

Myra's eyes filled with tears of sympathy and compassion. "Poor Lydia! yours is a sad case indeed!" As she spoke she took out her purse, and gave the poor woman a little money. Her heart ached for the terrible poverty she so often encountered in her walks, and nowhere more than in the precincts of Westminster, where vice and poverty are hid out of sight by the grim, palatial mansions of Victoria Street. It was to aid this poor creature that Myra had taken neither cab nor omnibus that day, though she was dead tired.

While engaged with the unfortunate object of her charity, she had forgotten him who had aroused her indignation, but glancing across the street, she observed that he was watching her movements intently. For Lord Wargrave's interest had been renewed in the fair unknown, so scornful, yet so dignified, by seeing her ministering to another's wants, out of what he felt must be a slender purse.

Worried by what she thought impertinent persistence, Myra was seized with a sudden inspiration, and stooping down to the miserable woman, she whispered hurriedly:

"Lydia, you can do me a service. That gentleman," hastily indicating the offender with her eyes, "has been following me for some time; I wish to get home without his discovering where I live. Go and speak to him: he is sure to give you something."

Like most of the London poor, the woman was quick-witted, and also devoted to her kind protectress, and hastened to do her bidding.

Myra, who was close to her own home, waited until she saw her enemy lending an attentive ear to the tale of misery which was being poured into it; then, thinking the moment propitious, she made one of her furious rushes to cross the street. The fog had again thick-

ened, the snow and sleet beat against her face. She was numbed with the bitter cold, and in the yellow darkness the lamps gave a quivering, uncertain light. When but half-way across, a loud shouting startled her into sudden terror. Madly, rapidly, furiously urged on by its gallant men, a fire-engine was tearing round the corner of the very street whither her steps were directed, unheedful in its onward course of all obstacles in its way.

The bewildered and terrified girl rushed back, then forward, then back again, and, finally, paralysed with fear, stood perfectly still in the middle of the road, as though she had been turned to stone. Nearer and nearer came the galloping horses; closer the shouts. Myra never moved. In vain Lord Wargrave and the affrighted Lydia called out to her; another moment, and her young life must have ended, had not Lord Wargrave, just as the horses' heads touched her shoulder, and at imminent risk to his own life, made a leap forward, and literally dragged her from under their feet.

On sped the engine to its mission of succour, while Myra, faint and bewildered, lay in the arms of him whom she had tried so hard to avoid. But she recovered herself quickly; she was not one to give way to hysterical emotion.

Hastily withdrawing from the supporting arm with which the young man had encircled her, and looking him steadily in the face, her large eyes seeming larger from the pallor of her cheeks, she said, in the soft voice with which she had at first addressed him:

"I have to thank you for saving my life, but if I had been killed, my death might have been attributed to you." Then she added with infinite pathos: "Why do you follow me? have you no mother, no sister, to make you, through them, respect other women, who, unprotected, have to make their own lives as best they can?"

The tears were in her eyes, and her voice shook with emotion. Lord Wargrave was infinitely touched by her pathetic address.

"Forgive me," he exclaimed. "And believe me when I say I had not the slightest intention of annoying you. I was actuated by the purest philanthropy; for having witnessed your fears, and aided you once, I thought I might be of use to you again in this horrible fog. And surely you will allow that I have been of some use, and in consideration say you forgive me if, unintentionally, I have seemed rude or disrespectful."

"On one condition I will forgive you," she replied, simply. "Go your way; let me go mine. Believe me, we have nothing in common. I am but a poor worker in this great city. If I may judge by this evening, you are one of the favoured few who have more time at their disposal than occupation. If you are in search of the latter, plunge into those courts and alleys where want and sin reign. You will there find plenty to occupy your idle hours, and your superfluous philanthropy."

She motioned, as she spoke, to a dark, forbidding opening in the

opposite street, down which Lydia, assured of her benefactress's safety, was wending her weary way, her wailing child after her.

Lord Wargrave felt the hidden sarcasm at the end of the young girl's speech, but was more than ever interested in her.

"Will you be my guide?" he eagerly said.

She shook her head.

"You will find plenty to guide you there, if you have the inclination to go. I must bid you good-night; and believe me I am not ungrateful for what you have done for me."

She turned hastily away; he followed her quickly, holding out the violets. "Take these in token that I am quite forgiven," he pleaded.

She hesitated a moment, and then accepted them, with a slight smile and a faint blush. "I will take them," she said. "And I trust to your honour not to follow me."

Another moment, and she had disappeared in the gloom and fog. Even if he had wished to follow, he would now have been at fault, but he had no such desire. She was henceforth sacred to him. "We shall meet again, I am sure," he thought, and hailing a passing cab, desired to be driven home. Appetite or no appetite he had had enough of the fog, but it had left him plenty to think about. On reaching his luxurious mansion, the butler informed him, with reproachful solemnity, that the company had all arrived.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I forgot there was anyone to dinner!"

Lord Wargrave had settled to dine early, and go with a chosen few to the play, of which fact his rencontre with Myra had made him perfectly oblivious. Making a hasty toilette, he descended to the dining-room, having desired his sister not to wait. But his head was so full of the strange girl who had administered him such a downright lecture, that the fair and high-born dame by whom he sat, after a vain effort to engage him in conversation, gave up the attempt in despair, voting him more than usually dull and odd.

In the meanwhile, wet, tired and hungry, Myra reached her humble lodging. The door was opened by a tidy, motherly-looking woman, who exclaimed with joy:

"Oh! my dear young lady, I am so glad to see you safe home. I feared some accident might have happened in this dreadful fog."

She took off the girl's wet waterproof as she spoke. Myra smiled and thanked her, and then wearily mounted to her little room at the top of the house. Here she found a good fire blazing, and tea prepared by the sole real friend she had—the owner of the house where she lodged. In this house her father and mother had both died within a few days of each other, from a malignant fever, caught in the discharge of duty. In dying they had recommended their child to Mrs. Morris's protection, and she had fulfilled the charge committed to her as far as lay in her power.

Myra's father had been curate of an obscure parish in London, and had married a young girl penniless as himself; for the aunt with

whom she lived, a rich, proud woman, and her only relative, had cast her off on her marriage, and steadily refused all communication afterwards. Perhaps had she known the untimely fate of Myra's parents, and the desperate desolation of the lovely girl, she might have been moved to compassion; but Mr. Graham was a gentleman, and proud also; he considered himself quite on a par with Mrs. Lethridge; and when his wife's third letter remained unanswered, he sternly forbade her to write again. Thus she was ignorant even of Myra's existence; who was left to battle alone with this hard world, her only inheritance the bright example and pure teaching of her parents.

Under the auspices of her clergyman, she was enabled to gain a slender subsistence by teaching, chiefly amongst the children of tradespeople. It was a sad life, and terribly lonely, but she was a brave girl. And now, as she flitted about her small room, she was smiling to herself as she thought she had not formed a wrong estimate of the young man to whom she certainly owed her life.

Had Lord Wargrave seen the careful, almost tender manner in which she placed his violets in water, he would have felt much satisfaction. Poor child! she had a passion for flowers: a passion which, from necessity and principle, she seldom indulged. Her own life was hard; few gleams of sunshine ever visited her; but others had still harder lives, fewer gleams of sunshine; and every spare halfpenny she possessed was spent to alleviate the misery of those less happy than herself.

As she eat her solitary evening meal, her eyes constantly wandered to the violets. Suddenly she burst into a merry laugh, making the room re-echo with her mirth. She was wondering where her courage had come from, to enable her to give so fine a gentleman such a downright lecture. How handsome he was, she thought; and though he had certainly saved her life, how little grateful or gracious she had been! Yes, she was glad she had taken the violets, though for a moment she had regretted doing so. They would never meet again, and there was an end of the matter.

So thinking, she cleared away her tea-things, put her violets close to her, and sat down to a diligent study of German. She looked forward to something better than teaching the children of parents who were vulgar and exacting; often insolent. She had been two years at this work, and how weary she was no one knew but herself.

At eleven o'clock the lonely girl, quite tired out, put her books away, and drawing a screen aside, which concealed her little bed, and having prayed for that protection she so sorely needed, she sought her hard-earned repose.

As she laid her lovely head on the pillow, Lord Wargrave was entering the Turf Club. Truly had Myra said: "We have nothing in common." Yet sometimes extremes meet.

II.

SEVERAL months have elapsed, and Lord Wargrave has not again met that lovely girl whose soft voice, and dignified manner have made an indelible impression upon his mind. True, he had left London a few days after his encounter with her, but both before his departure and since his return for the season, he has made diligent search for her in every street of Westminster, even plunging, as his fair mentor had recommended, into its darkest purlieus. But he had discovered no trace of her who has quickened within him this spirit of philanthropy. Myra was apparently lost to him for ever.

It was on one of the hottest days of an exceptionally hot summer, that Lord Wargrave and his sister were sitting in the dining-room of their house in Grosvenor Square. He was slowly eating his breakfast, which she had long finished. Lady Florence had given up the gay world for some years, but she loved to sit, work in hands, by her brother's side and listen to the account of his evening's amusement.

"How did you enjoy your ball last night?" she now asked him, still busily plying her needle.

Her brother replied with a yawn. "I will answer in three words, sister mine: bored, bored, bored!"

"Why are you always bored now?" she demanded, gravely.

"Why? because I am ever doomed to witness the same inane folly, to hear the same jingling music, to listen to the same idiotic remarks, to gaze at the same three everlasting professional beauties, with the same three stupid boobies ever in attendance on them, a host of minor boobies hovering in ill-concealed envy in the distance. Then, night after night, to see the same bevy of undignified married women, capering as though their lives and reputations depended on the number of their partners.—Oh! I am sick of the whole thing."

"Ah! my dear brother, I fear you are growing cynical," observed his sister, with a sigh. "How I wish you would marry."

"Marry," he exclaimed, getting up and walking to the window. "Thank you, Flo! To have the pleasure, after a few months of wedded bliss, of seeing my wife devoted to everybody and everything, except her husband and home."

Having said this with much bitterness, he continued in a more subdued tone: "Do you know, Flo, I have never seen but one woman who gave me any inclination to take upon myself the thraldom of matrimony, and I don't fancy you would care to call that woman sister. And yet—" he hesitated, and again looking out of the window, said reflectively—"I think I must tell you of an adventure I had last winter.——Why, Flo!" he exclaimed, suddenly breaking off in his revelation: "You have not turned Romanist, have you?"

A tall woman, in the garb of a Sister of Mercy, had passed and

rung the visitors' bell. On perceiving Lord Wargrave, she started violently, but her face was completely concealed by her bonnet and long black veil. At her brother's exclamation, his sister looked up.

"Oh! that is the Miss Graham I spoke to you about," she said, quietly. "She comes here to tell me how the mission work goes on, and we have become great friends."

"Well, Flo, if you are great friends, can't you induce her to dress a little more like ordinary people? I never saw such a guy. I hope she is not a wolf in sheep's clothing, striving to convert you to popery."

Lady Florence laughed.

"I don't see how my friend's dress can matter to you," she replied. "And as regards popery, set your mind at rest: Miss Graham is not Ritualistic, or even High Church." Rising as she spoke, she laid her hand lovingly on her brother's shoulder, adding: "Wargrave, I have asked Miss Graham to stay with me at Waltham, while you are in Norway. You have no objection?"

"None in life, dearest; but as you choose her for such close companionship, she is of course a lady, and you know all about her."

"Yes, the clergyman who introduced her to me has known her from childhood. In mind and manner she is a lady, and by birth also, but hers has been a sad life; she needs a little sunshine."

"Then, Flo, you are doing—as you always do—that which is right and kind."

He spoke absently, as if matters did not much concern him, and his sister left the room. He remained at the window, gazing gloomily out. In thought he was calling up the vision of that fair girl, casually met months ago, yet unforgotten, and whom he had given up hope of seeing again. To try and obliterate this mournful foreboding, and having nothing to do, he slowly lit a cigar, saying in sad soliloquy: "Poor girl! I should like her to know I am not the impertinent puppy I fear she believed me to be, though I saved her life. How unlike she was to the conventional young ladies one meets in a ball-room. Ah! if she only knew how she has influenced my life!"

We know that while these mournful regrets were occupying Lord Wargrave's mind, as regarded Miss Graham, she was actually under his roof. She had recognised him at once as she passed the window, and now, breathless and agitated, had reached Lady Florence's sitting-room. As the latter came in she kissed her, saying merrily:

"Now my princess in disguise, off with that horrid bonnet."

To her surprise Myra was trembling and pale, and her agitation increased, as, in a low voice, she asked, hurriedly: "Who was that gentleman at the window?"

"My brother, dear Myra. It is odd you have never met, but I respected your wish never to be introduced, and also of keeping this room private, when you are here. But," she added, with some surprise, "have you met Wargrave before?"

For a moment Myra hesitated, and then with a quiver in her voice

answered: "Yes, once, last winter, but without knowing him. He was very kind to me on that occasion; indeed, saved my life."

Lady Florence started, then pondered. She trusted the girl implicitly, and as she offered no further explanation she would not force her confidence. The enigma must explain itself. The current of her thoughts was checked for the moment by a servant entering the room, saying someone wished to see her on business. Seeing that Myra looked pale and weary, she placed her tenderly in her arm-chair.

"Rest yourself while I am away," she said; "you have had a weary walk." And kissing her with almost a mother's love, left the room.

Alone, the young girl allowed her bewildered head to fall back on its luxurious support, and strove to gather her scattered wits together. For months she had been endeavouring to avoid this man under whose roof she now found herself. Often she had been close to him unrecognised, for her dress was a complete disguise. The pulses of her heart had always quickened at these chance encounters, and had bounded with pure delight at meeting him more than once in those haunts of wretchedness, whither she had advised him to wend his steps, and where her vocation as a Sister of Mercy led her daily. For this was the life Myra had undertaken, by advice of her clergyman, who paid her a small stipend. Her lovely face, which had been a torment and hindrance to her in the rich and prosperous parts of the great city, was a help to her amongst the poor and wretched, who, in their sad lives, divested of all colour and beauty, often appreciate what is lovely and graceful.

As the young girl now reclined in pleasant idleness, and thought in whose house she was, she fervently hoped they might never meet. And yet it would be pleasant to exchange a few kind words with him who had saved her life; she had shown so little gratitude, had been so proud and hard. Should she tell the whole story of her chance meeting to Lady Florence? Yes, this would be best.

As Myra thus resolved, a gentle feeling of repose stole over her. She was unused to easy chairs, and what with the extreme heat and fatigue, her brain became confused, the breeze from the open window carrying with it the scent of mignonette, and the distant rumble of the carriages, seemed to lull her deadening faculties. Her beautiful head, with its masses of auburn hair, drooped to one side on a supporting cushion, her eyes closed. After one or two efforts to keep herself awake, her slightly-parted lips and regular breathing proved that slumber had taken complete possession of our heroine, oblivious that her destiny was working towards its accomplishment.

For Lord Wargrave, having received a letter which required his sister's advice in answering, was mounting the stairs in haste. He discreetly knocked at the door, without intention of entering: he had no wish to encounter the Guy, as he termed his sister's friend. Receiving no answer, and surprised at the stillness within, he stealthily entered and placing the letter on the table, said in a low voice:

"Empty, I declare. I wonder what she has done with the Guy, for there's her hideous bonnet."

Looking up for the first time, he observed the sleeping girl, and started. Myra's figure was perfect, and in her close-fitting black dress, as she lay in complete repose, it was displayed to the greatest advantage.

Lord Wargrave approached cautiously, and gazed at her in astounded admiration. As he gazed his heart beat faster, a thrill of doubtful hope stole over him. If she would but open her eyes! but no, they were sealed in the profoundest slumber, their long black lashes sweeping her transparent cheeks. The suspense was unbearable, and to end it he purposely upset a small stand of books. Myra started up as though she had been electrified, and opened wide her beautiful eyes. Doubt was at an end; who having once seen those eyes could forget them? For an instant they looked at each other in silence, which was broken by Lord Wargrave saying in a low tone of amazement:

"So you are Miss Graham!"

"I am," she replied, with quivering voice; "but, believe me, until to-day I had no idea you were Lord Wargrave."

"I have the misfortune to be that individual; and I can quite believe," he added, rather bitterly, "that had Miss Graham been aware of that fact nothing would have induced her to enter this house."

Myra was about to speak, but he continued, rapidly:

"I know I stand but low in your estimation; notwithstanding, I rejoice to hear you are my sister's friend, and that you will shortly be a guest in my house during my absence in Norway. You need be under no apprehension of being disturbed by my unwelcome presence." He bowed, and turned to leave the room, but was arrested by Myra's sweet voice.

"You are indeed mistaken," she cried. "Oh, Lord Wargrave," clasping her hands, "if I could only convey to your mind how often I have reproached myself for having shown so little gratitude to one who risked his life to save mine! But believe me, when, unknown to you, we have crossed each other's path, I have often longed to stay your footsteps, and tell you that there is scarcely a night I have not remembered you in my prayers. So you see I am not so ungrateful as I perhaps appeared."

Lord Wargrave approached her eagerly. His ardour had been considerably cooled by her quiet reception of his undisguised pleasure at meeting her again; now a radiant smile lit up his face as he said:

"If at so sacred a moment you could have given me a thought, however low your estimation of me may have been, it must have undergone some softening change, and I may hope you will accord me a little of that confidence and friendship which my sister enjoys."

"My friendship can be of little value to anyone," replied poor

Myra, humbly, "but I owe much to your sister. She has made life, that was to me unspeakably dark and lonely, almost bright and happy."

At this juncture the door opened, and Lady Florence re-entered the room. A slight shade of suspicion passed over her face, but it quickly cleared away as her brother said frankly and joyously :

"Florence, Miss Graham and I have discovered we are old acquaintances. You shall have a version of how and when we met from both of us." And, his face beaming with delight, he left the room. Slowly descending the stairs, he whispered to himself, "Found at last, and to be lost no more. But how am I to get out of that confounded trip to Norway?"

Ten days have elapsed, and Lord Wargrave, chafing in spirit, is still in London, dragging out the last week of the expiring season. He has not yet solved the problem, how to get out of the confounded trip to Norway. London, always hot and stuffy at the end of July, is unusually so this year; and as he creeps slowly up Piccadilly, under the fierce blaze of a scorching sun, he thinks what enchantment it would be to be lying in a punt in the cool shade of the back waters, with Myra by his side. What folly to make a precarious journey to Norway in search of salmon, when gudgeon are to be found in the Thames! Can he find no excuse for throwing over the friend with whom he is engaged for this fishing excursion. If that uncle of Mordaunt's would only die; he has been so long about it.

As this very charitable thought found birth in his mind, a friendly tap on the shoulder caused him to turn round with a start, and he found himself face to face with Colonel Mordaunt, who, endeavouring to look as solemn as the occasion required, said :

"I was trying to find you, old fellow. I am so sorry but I must give up Norway. My uncle is dead."

"You don't say so," exclaimed Lord Wargrave. "I am so glad." His friend stared at him.

"No, no, not glad—" correcting himself—"but don't humbug, my dear Mordaunt! Your uncle was a shocking old curmudgeon, and you are his heir; there was no love lost between you."

"True, very true," sighed Colonel Mordaunt; "he would have cut me off with a shilling if he could, but as he could not, I have an enormous amount of business to transact. But you will easily find someone to replace me for Norway."

"Norway be hanged," interrupted Wargrave, adding, with enthusiam : "no one could supply your place, my dear fellow! I shall give the whole thing up and return at once to Waltham. Enchanting at this time of year! You must run down and pay us a visit after the funeral."

Colonel Mordaunt, who had no idea he held so high a place in his friend's esteem, was puzzled, but he was accustomed to Wargrave's eccentricities, and too much pre-occupied with his own affairs to care

to solve the puzzle at that moment. At their club the friends parted, the Colonel to write letters, Lord Wargrave to prepare for immediate departure to Waltham. He had just time to catch the last train.

At Waltham, Lady Florence and her young friend were settled. But Florence, fifteen years older than her brother, was practical and far-seeing. Previous to leaving London, she had discovered that Myra's grand-aunt still lived. She had an interview with her, and that stern and proud old lady, who heard for the first time of the girl's existence, softened by age, and touched by the account of her lonely life, promised Myra a home if she chose to apply for it. Florence was satisfied and formed her plan of action.

For Myra, herself, a new world had opened. As she sat in unaccustomed idleness under the fragrant lime-trees, in the glorious evening light, gazing at the silvery Thames winding through its luxuriant valley, the fields ripening to harvest, their golden hue contrasting with the melting blue of the distant perspective, seen for miles from the vantage ground where she was placed, she realised for the first time that there is a poetic side to life, and that the actual fact of existence can be rapture. With her usual unselfishness, she longed that some of her poor friends out of the courts and alleys of Westminster could share her happiness, and unconsciously exclaimed aloud:

"Oh! if I were but rich."

"What would you do in that case?" asked a voice, close to her. She started. Lord Wargrave stood before her. "I hope you are quite strong now," he said, calmly. "You seem to appreciate my lovely view, but I hardly thought it would inspire so mercenary a wish as you have just expressed. Or is it that you desire riches simply to enrich others, Miss Graham?"

Myra, rosy red, took his outstretched hand. "I thought you were in Norway," she said, passing over his question.

"Quite impossible to get there this year," he responded, drily.

She did not ask why, and all further conversation between them was arrested by the appearance of Lady Florence, and there was an expression of vexation on her face, as she observed, "they had better come in, for it was close upon dinner-time."

That evening Myra was silent and grave; Lord Wargrave talkative and joyous. At an early hour she retired, thinking that brother and sister might wish to be alone. "I am unaccustomed to idleness, and I believe it wearies me," she softly said, as she left the room.

As soon as the door was closed, Florence looked gravely and keenly at her brother.

"Why have you given up your Norway trip?" she asked. He coloured slightly as he replied:

"The fates were against it, and in favour of my studying your sweet friend's character. Don't look so alarmed, Flo; I am not in love yet, but deeply interested. As for Miss Graham, I have no reason for thinking that she regards me with anything but indifference, tem-

pered with a small modicum of gratitude. Florence," he continued, with some agitation, "you who know and love this girl must acknowledge that she is the most lovable and interesting creature you have ever seen."

"What I think is not of much consequence, my dear brother. But have you considered what the world will say when they hear you have taken for your wife one whom a chance encounter in the streets has thrown across your path?"

"Bother the world," laconically put in his lordship.

His sister, with a faint smile, continued: "Do not mistake, Wargrave: I like and am deeply interested in Myra; but be guided by me in this matter. If you have really and truly fallen in love with her, and have serious thoughts of making her your wife, you must carry on the study of her character under another roof than your own."

"Where in the name of creation is that roof to be found, Florence; for it strikes me Miss Graham has none," irritably responded her brother.

It was now that Lady Florence divulged the existence of Myra's aunt, and the fact that she had promised to receive her. Truth to say, with a romantic feeling hardly to be suspected at her age, almost from the first day she had known Myra, it had flashed across her mind again and again, what a perfect wife this pure and lovely girl, so unspoiled by the world, would make her fastidious and noble-minded brother. And if she had rejected the idea as inconsistent, absurd, improbable, altogether a freak of the imagination, it was only to have it recur to her on the next occasion with greater force than ever. It would come, in spite of herself; and, as it came, it presently grew almost into a hope.

When she had fully unfolded her carefully prepared tactics, to the details of which her brother had lent breathless attention, he started from his chair, and, looking at his sister with comic astonishment, exclaimed: "Florence, you are that one woman in a thousand, whom Solomon, with all his wisdom, failed to find. Most generous of sisters, henceforth, I shall ever be guided by you; but I demand one week, wherein, floating on the glorious old Thames, I may begin that study I have so much at heart."

His sister shook her head. "I mistrust you, Wargrave," but kissing him fondly, she added: "We will sleep over our little plot, and see how morning's light may help us to untie the Gordian knot."

And when that morrow came, the plans so ingeniously made by Lady Florence were frustrated, by finding her young friend seriously ill. On getting out of bed she had fainted.

Poor Myra! It was the beginning of a long and tedious illness. The doctor spoke of nervous exhaustion and overwork; recommended rest, large rooms, generous diet, all to be had where she was, and where it is needless to say she remained. Days grew into weeks, and Miss Graham was still at Waltham, and as, in her slow convalescence,

she lay in her host's terraced garden, he had ample time for the study of her character : a sweet study which fully repaid him.

With what attention he listened to her advice and suggestions, as he unfolded to her his plans for the amelioration of that class among whom her young life had been spent ! Even if she had wished to escape from his never varying care and attentions, how could she, chained as she was by languor and weakness to her sofa ? But did she wish it ? She desired to do so, but alas ! she knew now that she loved him, and trembled.

But the time came when Myra, strong and well, had more complete mastery over her rebelling heart. Her duty lay plainly marked out before her. Summer was rapidly mellowing into autumn ; she must not delay ; nor would she make any excuse to herself for so doing. And one morning, as she and Florence sat together, she expressed, with many thanks for all the kindness which she had received, her determination of returning to work.

With anxious eyes Florence had been watching how the young girl, in whom she took an almost motherly interest, would act when restored to health. The temptation to which she had been exposed by her brother's open admiration and attentions, at a time when she had no means of evading them, she knew had been fierce ; and Florence's heart bounded with unselfish satisfaction at the assurance, given by Myra herself, that she was not mistaken in the estimate she had formed of her character. But if Myra had any hopes that she would negative her resolution of so speedy a departure, she was disappointed. Kissing her lightly on the forehead, Florence simply said :

"Your determination is quite right, dear, but we shall be very sorry to lose you."

That afternoon, sad and restless, Myra stole down to a favourite spot to think in silence and solitude of happy hours passed, to be replaced by toil and loneliness. Her spirit did not shrink from the work that lay before her. She loved the poor. Their sorrows and cares were hers, and in thinking of them, she almost reproached herself (notwithstanding her illness) for all the luxury in which she had been living during the last two months. But still she mourned over the love and beauty of the life she had determined to quit, and felt an acute pang of grief at the careless ease with which Florence had taken the announcement of her departure. Would it be the same with her host ? A few tears stole down her cheeks at such a possibility, and as the sad thought took still deeper possession of her mind, she covered her face with her hands and wept in silent bitterness of spirit.

Unnoticed, Lord Wargrave approached, and, standing beside the weeping girl, watched her in momentary silence. Then, seeing that her tears continued to flow, he said in an agitated voice :

"Why do you weep, Miss Graham ? Can I hope that you are grieved even a little at leaving Waltham ?"

Myra looked up, hastily brushing away her tears; it was vain to try and conceal them.

"How could I but grieve at leaving those who have been so wonderfully good to me?" she answered, sadly. "I who have known so little of this world's kindness? But (unconsciously she repeated the words spoken to him long ago) I am but a poor worker in this world, and I must fulfil my destiny."

"And how about those crossings which cause you so much terror?" He half smiled as he spoke.

"I must learn to conquer those foolish fears," she replied, firmly.

"But not alone, sweet Myra," he exclaimed. "Let me be your guide over all life's crossings. However they may be fraught with danger—as alas! all life's crossings often are—if you will accept my love and guidance, I will strive to lead you safely over them all. And when that may not be, we will share the danger together."

For a moment she neither spoke nor moved. Then she turned and looked at him, all the long, suppressed love of her heart beaming forth from her eyes. But the only word she uttered was—"Florence?"

"She sent me to you!" he said, rapturously clasping her in his arms.

JOY, LOVE, AND LIFE.

Sorrow is long in our life—joy is short!
The greater the joy, the shorter its life,
And peace is fleeting compar'd with strife,
And we love not as we ought:
We love too late,
Or we love too long,
And 'tis weary to wait,
Though love be strong!

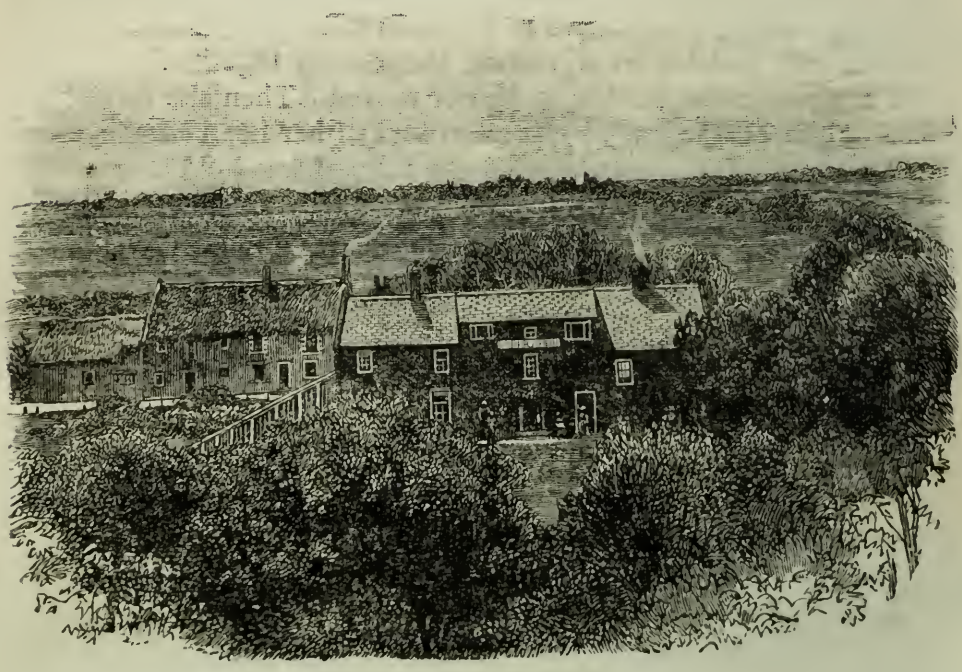
Ah! the greatest joy is the soonest past,
The fairest flower first fades i' the sun,
The sweetest song is the soonest done,
And the dearest kiss is the last:
Once joy is rife,
It runneth to wrack:
One waiting is life,
Then—one looking back!

Lena Milman.

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S.
Author of "Through Holland," "The Cruise of the Reserve Squadron," &c.

ONE secret of success in life is to grasp your opportunity. There are who do not see it when it comes, but these form the exception to the rule. Others again, though they see it, for want of



Stock's Dixcart Hotel.

energy or spirit let it pass. It is gone, and it will return for them no more. Or, if it does, it is that they were born under a lucky star, and the tide in their affairs has flowed twice to the flood. They had no right to expect it; and any man presuming upon chance or good luck, will find these fickle goddesses fail him. They come fitfully, silently, without warning, and their stay is generally of the shortest.

When our opportunity for seeing Sark came, we made the most of it. The morning was bright, the sky was clear, and the sea smooth. In less than an hour, we had debated, doubted, decided, arranged with a boatman, packed, breakfasted, left the heavier portion of our luggage (including the Jersey cabbage-stalks), in the custody of our host of Old Government House, made our way to the quay, and at the foot of the statue erected to Prince Albert, found the boatmen in patience waiting our advent.

To get down the steps, into a punt, and find ourselves in the little fishing smack, was the work of a few moments. The sail was set, she slipped her moorings, and we flew out of the harbour. The day was bright, bracing, and exhilarating. The sun was warm and everything sparkled. There was just sufficient breeze to speed us quickly; to give freshness to the water and to the spray that now and then broke over the bows of the smack. Ripples flashed in the sunlight; our path was strewn with jewels—and, at this moment, certainly with roses. The little islands of Herm and Jethou were before us, sleeping in the early sunshine. Beyond them Sark, our land of promise, was just sufficiently veiled in mist to look everything that was romantic and interesting.

SARK WITCHES.

We had bargained to land at Herm and Jethou on our way, but by a slight misunderstanding on the part of the boatmen, the arrangement fell through. Perhaps it was as well. Had we landed, the men might possibly have lost the return tide, and not have reached Guernsey again before seven or eight at night. So, if we were not quite clear as to how the confusion arose in the men's minds, we abstained from going closely into details, and let it pass. But we had lost out chance, and it did not occur again. An occasion had to be made, a very different matter from an unsought opportunity. We agreed with the men that they should return for us, and the islands should be explored in going back; but for reasons hereafter to be seen, they never did return.

So we made way that morning. In full sail we passed Herm and Jethou, free as birds of the air. Does the reader know the sen-

sation? What can equal it? We had thrown off the world. All care and trouble, the shadows that lurk in our paths, the clouds that veil our sunshine, these were deliberately put aside; buried in the depths of the bright blue sea through which we were now skimming. We traced the long wake made by the little skiff—our pathway through the great waters. Guernsey receded; houses and slopes diminished; green hills and waving trees grew faint, invisible; white cliffs and rocks became hazy. Now and then a black guillemot crossed our path, or a strong-winged cormorant, with neck outstretched, looking cruel and greedy, but hastening onward with so straight a course, one felt it belonged to a race of birds full of character and mental decision.

So we passed under the very shadow of Herm, and waited not. Onward, straight as a dart, swift and sure, we made for Sark. We neared it, and revelled in the grandeur of its rocky coast. It was worthy its reputation, and many of the cliffs were almost perpendicular. We traced the outline of Great and Little Sark, and the narrow pathway of the precipitous Coupée, but for which, the one island would become two. By the help of a rope attached to a ring in the cliff, two or three fishermen were descending, scaling the rocky wall like flies: their life, or at least their limbs, depending upon a thread, though no doubt a strong one. The island looked wild and beautiful, as far as it could be seen, from this point; the rocks were noble and majestic, broken and rugged, here high and towering, there sloping to the sea.

The harbour lay on the other side of the island, and to go round would have considerably added to the journey, and certainly have lost the return tide to the men. Moreover, it was far more adventurous to run into a wild little bay, land, as it were, sub rosa, take the island by storm, and climb up the rugged rocks to the flat surface, than sail round to a commonplace harbour, and land in orthodox, commonplace manner, with steps built up to make the way easy, a highroad to the inn, and possibly a conveyance in waiting.

And yet I must hasten to add that the harbour of Sark is not commonplace. It is wonderfully small, beautiful and romantic; sheltered by high cliffs, and giving access to the interior only by tunnels in the rocks, unlike anything to be found elsewhere. There is, indeed, nothing commonplace about Sark, of any shape or description, animate or inanimate. It is the embodiment of wild beauty and grandeur; exquisite solitude, perfect, uninterrupted communion with nature. Like a vigorous intellect, it commands your attention; like infinite love, it lays hold upon your heart and reigns there for ever.

So we thought it much greater fun, far more interesting and exciting, to run into the little Havre Gosselin. It was a small bay, almost a creek. High, perpendicular rocks rose on each side. A small, rough, pebbly beach on which to land, and after that the upward climb. A rocky, rugged pathway enabled one to do this. Or rather,

there was no real pathway at all, but a series of rocky stones of all shapes and sizes, too often with the points upwards, and a wild tangle of brambles and blackberry bushes, and a chance of falling headlong amongst the thorns. All this, however, was so much slight adventure by the way; the triumph over small difficulties dear to the heart of all true wanderers.

The little fishing-smack ran in as far as was safe, then hauled down her sail and launched her punt. This in due time grated over the bottom, and without the humiliation of a "hoist" from the men, we found ourselves on terra firma. Yet so loose were the stones, and so unsteady our gait, that for some moments an onlooker might have supposed the water of the sea had been turned into spirit, and we had paid undue devotion thereto. This feeling of insecurity quickly disappeared, and with it all unsteady and erratic symptoms, and we prepared for action.

We had landed. The next thing was to rise from the depths of this creek to the high level of the island. The surrounding rocks were grand and gloomy. Small caves suggested subterranean passages leading, perhaps, to another world or to the bosom of this. Great boulders and loose stones lay about, detached portions of the cliffs that had fallen from time to time. There was no sign of human habitation, no sound of life. No "eagle's wing cleft the sky," and the clang of the sea-gull echoed from no hidden recess. But we longed for "mighty pinions," to bear us up that uneven, brambly path, which looked more formidable now than it did from the distance that is said to lend enchantment to the view, and is beyond all doubt deceptive.

There was the luggage also. Only a portmanteau it is true, but as much beyond the powers of one of us at least, as if it had been the hysterical lady's trunk which had nearly drowned us on leaving Jersey. The boatmen were very good; they had only bargained to land us, and might have left us to shift for ourselves, especially as every moment was of tidal importance. But they did not. They apostrophised the fishermen we had seen coming down the flat surface of the cliff with the help of a rope; and it was the first and the last time we heard an uncivil answer in Sark. We were in the depths, but they consigned us to lower depths still—possibly the bosom of the earth already referred to, and suggested by those black openings in the rocks; caverns that seemed to yawn for their prey. The boatmen might lose their tide; we might sit upon our baggage for a week, like a couple of Napoleons gazing at the sea and longing for liberty; finally we might return whence we came, before they would put themselves out for an instant, or help us in our extremity.

So the boatmen with a good grace shouldered luggage and great coats, and commenced to climb. The surly fishermen went off to their smack and their nets, and we could not find it in our hearts to return good for evil, and wish them a full haul.

It was a rugged pathway, certainly; a mere stepping from one stone to another, with occasionally a small rock to be taken with hands as well as feet. But the men thought nothing of it and outstripped us very quickly. Delicious blackberries crossed our path, or we crossed theirs. H., whose taste for blackberries had been cultivated to a passion, went in for minute-halts, and feasted under pretence of taking breathing time. After all, though much more rugged, it was not half so bad as I had once found climbing the mountain of the North Cape, in the middle of a certain July, all for the pleasure of encountering on the dreary table-land that was its crown and glory a wind that cut one in two, and blinding sleet and snow. Never shall I forget the paralysing effect of looking down the perpendicular slope that had to be scaled before our frozen limbs could return to the steamer: never forget stepping upon a long surface of frozen ice and taking a first lesson in toboganning, which, but for the chief officer of the good ship *Michael Krone*, would undoubtedly have proved a last one also.

No; this was not so bad as that. Everything here was on a smaller scale, and there was neither snow nor east-wind, but warm sunshine and bluest of skies. And all this climbing came to an end, and we found ourselves at last on level ground. We looked back. We can look back sometimes, in life, though we may very seldom retrace our steps. What a privilege that would often be; how many sighs and tears would remain unborn. Lamentations and mourning and woe were the burden of the prophet's record: is it not too often the experience of life? But no doubt it helps to form those "stepping-stones of our dead selves," which lead upwards to higher things. Let us hope so at any rate. To suffer in vain, and know it to be in vain, it is that which kills the body and quenches the spirit.

We looked back. We could hardly trace our pathway. The little beach seemed quite far off, the sea gently plashing upon the shore could scarcely be heard. In the distance Guernsey looked dreamy and hazy; yet further away Jersey was so much shadowy cloudland. Not many yards from where we stood were a few cottages, and a man from one of them agreed to carry our traps to the inn. Pigs, more suggestive of use than romance, ran about his little garden, and grunted us a possible welcome, possibly a protest against this invasion of their sacred dominions. We were not learned in pig language and could not read the interpretation thereof. The boatmen gave us no help. Released, their bargain more than fulfilled, their well-earned pay more than adjusted, they went down the rugged cliff like lamplighters, put off in the punt, and in a few moments were sailing towards Guernsey with a fair tide.

The man at whose mercy we now felt ourselves, was a grim and gaunt, ungainly specimen of mankind. His clothes looked as if he occasionally delighted, like his pigs, to wallow in the mire. He

spoke not a word of English, and his French was the Sark patois which is always wonderful, and frequently, very frequently, obscure. You have to guess at much that is said, and sometimes make extremely awkward blunders. The English, too, of those who "have any" is often peculiar. They change the first letter of some of the words, make hard soft and soft hard, and so vindicate human nature by playing at the rules of contrary. Thus when one day, exploring, we met an old woman trundling a barrow, and asked her whether it was possible to return to the hotel by another way than that we were taking :

CREUX HARBOUR.

"Oh yez, sir," she said: "you may gome down the gommon, and co round by that liddle hill, and if you co down to the pottom you will zee a sthream and a zmall cate, and then if you chust gome up the falley, why there you are at Stock's Hotel."

We thanked the old lady as well as we could, but laughter and politeness had a hard fight for victory. She went off with her barrow, and looked back every now and then, wondering, no doubt, whether her description had been sufficiently graphic. It had indeed; every word had told. And the next time she met us, on this occasion without her barrow, she stopped us quite as old acquaintances, and entered into a conversation that, for the sake of the inventors of the next new language, it is to be regretted space forbids the record.

But we are progressing too quickly—a sign of the age. We are

forestalling our matter, or as the French would say, nous mangeons nôtre blé en herbe: another and very frequent sign of the age. For the moment we have only just landed, and are at the mercy of *Sercquois*, whose pastime is evidently to wallow in the mire.

He was very big and strong, and we felt it was only policy to be more than usually civil to him. So we talked, and he talked, and when we arrived at an obscure point of the conversation we changed the subject. We were bound for Stock's Dixcart Hotel, where we were told—with much more truth than is always the case—we should be very comfortable. In this instance, it was twice fortunate, as Stock's Hotel was a sort of Hobson's choice. It was that or none. It is at all times the best, though in the season there are one or two other inns on the island. But the season was now over.

From the very first moment of landing we fell hopelessly in love with Sark. At once we felt at home there; felt, as it were, that it was part and parcel of ourselves. It was new ground, yet not strange ground. We might have been there often before, either actually or in dreams. I believe the secret of this is that it is one of those small paradises we imagine to exist, but rarely meet with. There are, indeed, very few places like Sark.

As we went our way there was nothing for the moment specially to attract attention. The island presented a generally flat surface, for its small valleys and lanes sloping seaward were out of sight. A distant windmill, the only one on the island, was the most prominent landmark. Our road, white, hard and well made, was bounded by fields and low hedges. Blackberries were again abundant and an enterprising maiden with a jug was gathering a harvest. She was good enough, however, to leave substantial gleanings for other people and other days. She was inquisitive as well as enterprising, for on catching sight of us she stopped her work, stared her utmost, and evidently wondered where we had come from, and what was our pleasure. But she was a very ordinary maiden, and the gifts Nature had bestowed or withheld from her were further disguised by blackberry stains, proving that all she picked did not find its way to the jug. She was poaching as well as preserving. So we passed on, neither satisfying her curiosity nor staring in return.

Soon after this—the only sign of humanity we met on our way—we turned down a lane that in summer must be more than beautiful. Trees met and arched overhead in a wild, rustic manner more captivating than the most artistic culture. But the leaves had thinned, and most of them lay brown and dead upon the earth. To-day the road was dry and the leaves rustled and crackled to the tread, with an exquisite sound which might be called the frou-frou of decaying nature; but for the rest of our stay the road was muddy and sloppy; the dead leaves had no beauty in them; and misty phantoms of fever in the shape of exhalations proved that nature, like all else in this world, possesses a reverse side to the medal.

At the end of this lane we turned to the right, and in a few moments found ourselves at Stock's Hotel. A first impression was certainly disappointing. Everyone draws a mental sketch of unseen people and places. We had imagined the inn perched on a cliff, overlooking the grand sea, within sound of its eternal beat, leading through immense rocks, to the fresh, breezy beach. Instead of this, the inn was placed at the head of a valley, and the view seemed narrow and confined. It proved less so when we grew familiar with it, and the situation has, in reality, much in its favour, overlooks much that is beautiful. But when imagination has prepared the mind for a certain picture, and the opposite is found, even though it be equally attractive, a slight shock is the result.

There was no sign of life about the inn. Evidently guests were not in the habit of coming upon them in the month of October like a thief in the night. The door stood open, and we entered and took possession. We might also have taken possession of the spoons, for not a creature was visible. We knocked and after an amount of time and patience, a dog appeared. He wagged his tail in answer to our looks and questions, and we felt what an immense blessing it would be if, occasionally, men and women were equally silent. A second and louder summons brought forth at the end of a long period a maiden, who was not dumb, though beautifully modest and subdued. We enquired for the landlord.

"If you please, sir," she replied, in the gentlest of tones, and with a trembling which might be the result of fear or ague; "if you please, sir, he's up a tree."

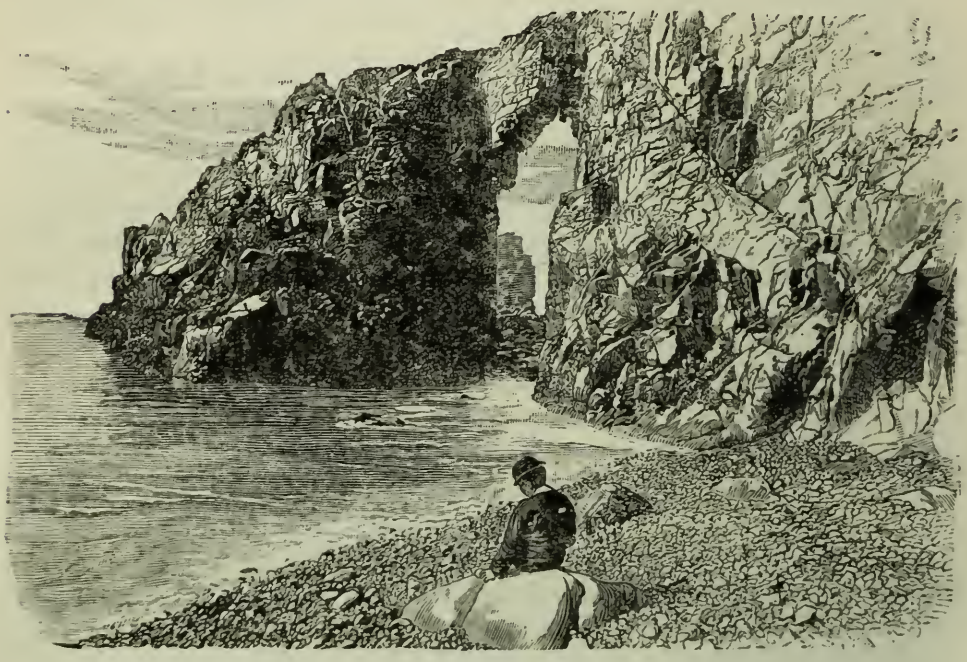
Could anything be more startling than this announcement? It was a greater shock, far more alarming, than the Medusa-like reception of the landlady at the Gouffre. There, a little tact and flattery had very quickly raised the siege of resistance. But to be told that your landlord is up a tree seems to imply that for him the end of all things has arrived. Après cela le deluge. We really felt alarmed, for there was no going back to Guernsey. The house might be in possession of a hundred myrmidons of the law; here we were, and here we must remain.

"Up what tree?" we enquired, as soon as reason reasserted itself.

"If you please, sir," in the same gentle voice, "up an apple tree. He's getting in the apples. He didn't expect you, sir, and will be here as soon as he can get down."

A very different matter, this, and a great relief. And when, before long, the landlord, having released himself from his compromising position, appeared in shirt-sleeves and with a basket of apples on his arm, we felt that the absence of stiffness and ceremony was delicious as it was novel, and welcomed him as a rose in June. He seemed so glad to see us, declared so readily that he would do all in his power to make us comfortable, that we then and there became as old habitués of the place.

For, after all, it is only human to wish to be "comfortable." The very sound of the word possesses a charm; and of all nations, perhaps, the English are the most comfort loving. This arises probably, less from a desire for ease and luxury than from habit; for one of the endeavours of life is to make home restful. And of all people the Englishman best understands the meaning of the word home; is most attached to it; clings to its memory with as deep-rooted a feeling as the Savoyard, and with a far higher sentiment. The one loves his mountains; the other is haunted by the tones, the voices and the footsteps, the pleasures that were shared and the sorrows that were divided, which have all helped to make sacred the recollection. Years pass on; we go out into the world, take part in the



DIXCART BAY.

bustle that never ceases, new loves, new hopes spring up, a thousand interests, ambitions, aims seem to weaken the affections by dividing them into innumerable channels; but at the bottom of the well of memory there lies an inexhaustible spring, colouring the life, influencing thoughts and actions, though it may be unconsciously. It is the remembrance of our early home; of a gentle voice that reigned there and sweetened our days and years; where all was piety and all was peace. In this one matter at least, we are "once a child, always a child." It is the best part of us; we do well to cling to it. Unhappy they who have not this influence and halo to carry with them into the battle of life, as a help against temptation, as an aid against the sorrows that overwhelm, the disappointments that embitter, the deceptions that harden. For the sake of that bygone time, and of the sweet voice and eyes that first taught us the realities of love and

the existence of goodness, we keep firm our early faith, and cling to it as—what it truly and indeed is — a blessed and an immortal heritage.

It took us no time whatever to settle down in our Sark hotel. We felt at home at once, as far as all comfort and the wants of life could realise the word to us. To make it infinitely more pleasant, we had the place entirely to ourselves; and this doubled the value of the landlord's civility and good humour, for he necessarily had to put himself out almost as much for two guests as for twenty. Steamers had ceased to run, excursions were over, he had gone into winter quarters.

This did not mean, with him, a season of leisure and inactivity. He was always at work. Cutting down trees; dismantling green-

LES AUTELETS, SARK.

houses for the pleasure, as it appeared, of building them up again; racking his brains to invent work that did not come to hand. Night and day he seemed ever on the move, a mass of human quicksilver. If one rose in the dark hours to gaze for a moment at the starry sky, and to revel in the fresh breeze that blew in at the wide open windows, there inevitably was the shadow of mine host cast by a brilliant moon, as he wandered restlessly to and fro, surveyed his territory, and no doubt planned and plotted fresh work. Whether, at these unseasonable hours he was ever to be found as we first found him—up a tree—I never knew. If, at six in the morning, one got up to watch the grand effects of sunrise—the day always seems to begin with a vision of heaven and a burst of glory, and the silent, sleeping world looks like paradise, and the mind still calm and untried by the day's ruffles, is attuned thereto—without fail there was our landlord flitting about

with noiseless tread and deep in the mysterious process of turning things upside down and inside out, studying the doctrine of changes, which might, at the same time, be that of chances, so full of experiments did he seem. I quite admired his energy and powers of inventing work. Life to him meant labour; he was the embodiment of perpetual motion. Here we have a type of mind that acts too much upon instinct and impulse, and, doing many things right, is sure also to make mistakes in passing through the world.

But one thing is certain, that in catering for us, he made no mistake, unless it was that of furnishing too abundant a table. His wife must have been a professed cook; a thorough "cordon bleu." Everything she sent up was perfectly dressed, and her resources were infinite. I dread to think what might have been the effect upon us of a long sojourn. We were only two, and it was impossible, it would have been the highest ill-breeding, a cruel slight, not to recognise and do full justice to the efforts of this artist. The consequences, I say, might have been terrible. A development of what phrenologists call the organ of gustativeness; a settled hankering after the fleshpots of Egypt; a fearful change from a cadaverous and wiry frame to the miseries of ponderosity and the irritating torments of a sluggish liver. H., who was almost a vegetarian, completely altered his regimen, easing his conscience by daily protests to which I paid no attention, and declaring that his sole reasons were a consideration for the feelings of this unseen genius, and by which I was not in the slightest degree hoodwinked.

I have said that the pleasure of our stay at the inn was much increased by having it entirely to ourselves. We had the run of all the rooms, might lounge and loiter in the passages unmolested, could do exactly as we pleased, come and go as we liked, were free and unrestrained. I chose a bed-room with two windows having different aspects, and had them open night and day, even if a gale were blowing. There was something so delicious about the air of Sark, so reviving, bracing, invigorating, yet with an utter absence of all harshness and severity, that it was impossible to have too much of it. One seemed to breathe life itself into the veins: and surely in Sark people ought never to grow old. They do live to a great age, but I am bound to say they also look it.

The population is about 600; the people are most of them poor, though thrifty; their life is very much exposed to the elements, and their food is of a simple kind. These conditions tend to wrinkle the brow before the time, furrow the cheek, silver the hair, and bend the back. There is every appearance of age and the feeling also, long before three score years and ten are reached. Yet as it is a healthy life, full of healthy influences, so they often reach the four score years of labour and sorrow. The oldest inhabitant, we were told, was even close upon five score, and had others to keep her company in calling up the recollections of nearly a century of time.

But the century has worked less changes and wonders in Sark than in the outer world. Many of the ways and customs then in existence exist still. The very language must be unchanged; it certainly sounds as though it might have adorned the middle ages. Revolutionary inventions have spared Sark. It has not even been built over. The few houses one sees might have been there long before the oldest inhabitant came into existence. I do not say that it is so, but there is nothing in their appearance to make it improbable. It has no telegraph, and so is cut off from immediate communication with the world. The most inveterate lover of the wire must here leave you at peace; you may boldly defy him. The very feeling gives rest unto your body, a sweet calmness takes possession of your mind. Railways, of course, have never even been heard of, the shrill steam whistle, that in some cases, such as the fog horn, is called a syren (surely so first christened by one possessing a grim sense of humour), never startles you. No fine equipages dasn along the roads to remind you of the restraints of society and the conventional forms of polite life. All is primitive, with a delicious freedom worth a king's ransom. It cannot be too highly prized. You revel in it, dwell upon it, loudly declare its charm a hundred times a day. The idea of returning again to that restless world with all its claims and all its ruffles, the romance it ought to be, and the reality it is, becomes intolerable.

So primitive is the island that it depends a good deal for its supplies upon the market boat. And the market boat depends upon the weather. It is supposed to go over to Guernsey at least once in seven days; it has been known, and not at all infrequently, to remain weather-bound within the little Creux Harbour of Sark for three weeks. On these, usually winter, occasions, the island for that period of time is cut off from the rest of the world. Though you desire to get away, and though your errand be one of life or death, you must remain in statu quo, and in patience possess your soul.

The market boat is merely a small lugger, no bigger than a fishing smack. It will accommodate about twenty people, but they must sit very close and keep very still. You must pay extra for elbow room. There is no cabin, and if the weather is rough you have no refuge from the stormy winds and waves. The water breaks over the boat, and finds out the weak joints in your armour: runs down your neck and splashes your face, so that you have to untuck to make yourself comfortable again. All this is trying to the temper. You reach your destination cold, wet, and miserable. Life is a burden and mankind odious. The bread and the butter and other necessaries of life have escaped all harm except a decided salt sea flavour. And oh! what a consolation to reach the refuge of that little harbour. The seven miles separating Sark from Guernsey have appeared seventy. You feel you would rather face the Bay of Biscay at its worst in a steamer, than this little passage in a market boat.

But these miseries, as a rule, happen in winter. The summer journeys, in fair weather, are everything that is delightful, provided the boat is not overfreighted with passengers and provisions. We were amused at the description of the little maiden who waited upon us at the inn, and won our regard by her quiet ways and willing manners. One stormy day, when she was endeavouring to light an obstinate fire, the following conversation took place.

"Lucinda, are you a native of Sark?"

"Oh no, sir," was the reply, delivered in the tone of a remonstrance. "My people"— it is singular how quickly they catch up the tricks and turns and mannerisms of "society"— "My people belong to Guernsey."

"One of the old Guernsey families, Lucinda?"

"Yes, sir, very old"—cross questions and crooked answers. "Grandmother lived to be nearly a hundred. Grandfather's alive still. He's very troublesome. They say he'll never die."

"Guernsey must be a very healthy spot, Lucinda?"

"Pretty well, sir. But Aunt Félicité says it's aggravation, more than anything else."

This was put obscurely, but the noun was evidently intended to refer to person and not place. Grandfather was living on to spite his relatives.

"Do your people ever come to see you, Lucinda?"

"No, sir; but I go to them, every Christmas, for three weeks." It was quite pleasant to see the glow of anticipation that transformed the little face.

"That must be a very happy time for you?"

"Oh, sir! I couldn't stay in Sark if it weren't for that. Not but what Mr. and Mrs. Stock are as kind as kind can be. But they're not father and mother, sir."

"How do you go over on those occasions?"

"In the market-boat, sir. There's no other way."

"And are you a good sailor?"

"No, sir. I shut my eyes when I get into the boat, and I open them again when I get out of it. And, even then, sometimes I'm very ill."

"Have you ever had a bad passage, Lucinda?"

"Yes, sir. Last Christmas we were seven hours crossing, and were nearly lost. The men gave themselves up. When we got to Guernsey the boat was half full of water, and we were all wet through. I was sitting with my feet in a cold sea bath, and had to be carried on shore, as near frozen as possible."

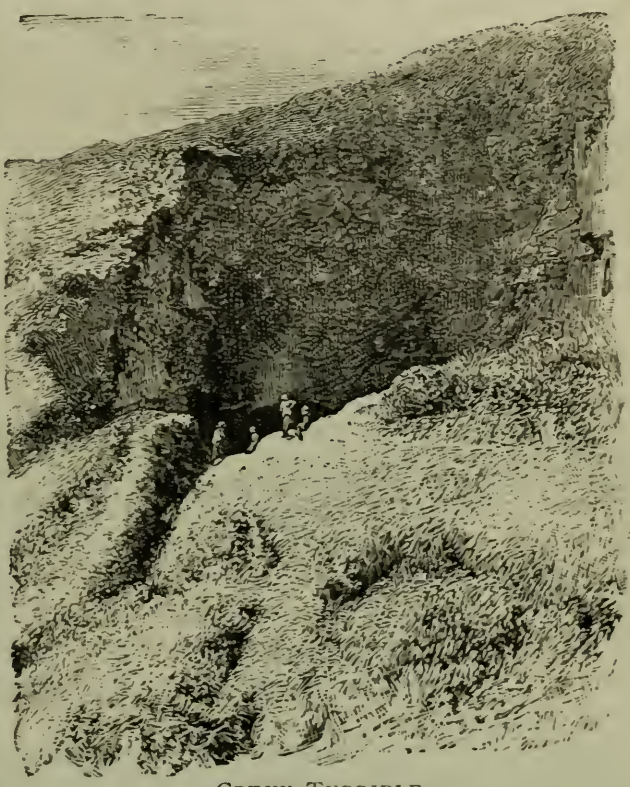
"You must have been very ill."

"No, sir. I was much too frightened to be ill."

This was a new remedy for mal-de-mer, and gave one an idea. The difficulty would be to obtain the ingredient. Sea air, as advertised, may be supplied in bottles, as well as the human voice

but would it be possible, even in these wonderful days, to accomplish an "Extract of Fear?"

By this time the obstinate fire had burnt up. Lucinda with a pair of bellows that would almost have served a blacksmith's turn, had raised almost as great a tempest within as raged without. The wood crackled, the coal lighted, the sparks flew round; a roaring flame went up the chimney. H. shouted for joy. It was the one subject on which we differed. I delighted in open windows and doors, deep draughts of fresh air, the smell of the salt sea, the close waving and surging of the trees: all this was so much life and health and keen enjoyment. His pleasure, on the contrary, was to close and bolt all windows, shut all doors, cement all cracks, sit in an easy-chair, with nose and knees just an inch from the blazing fire, draw down all blinds at the very first approach of twilight, when the sky is at its best, have lamps brought in, and call the result paradise. And he had no excuse: young, vigorous and active, it was pure indulgence, pampered luxury.



CREUX TERRIBLE.

The tempest alluded to was the normal state of things during nearly the whole of our stay in Sark. Had we not left Guernsey that first morning, we could not have done so any other for a whole week. With one exception, no boat left Sark and none came to it. The sea lashed the little island in fury, a greater protection against an enemy than the strongest forts ever built. We were cut off from the world and revelled in our security. We had intervals of calm, and moments of sunshine; but the skies were generally cloudy; the sea broke and dashed against the cliffs; rain often came down in torrents.

Only at night would the clouds break, and the full moon show herself, large, bright and silvery. Detached portions of clouds would fly with amazing rapidity across the dark sky. Deep, dark shadows, silent, mysterious and to the last degree solemn, swept the moonlit island, chasing each other like the shadows of ghostly armies in a

world unseen. Nothing could be grander than these tempestuous skies; infinitely finer than the calm skies of repose, when we were able to trace the onward, silent march of the stars and constellations through those boundless realms, which, like eternity itself, are without centre and without circumference.

One of our favourite walks in the island was through Dixcart Valley to Dixcart Bay, from which the hotel takes its name. A very few minutes sufficed for the walk: a continual descent, with the valley or ravine on our left. Dividing the ravine, was a stream; and here and there a small rustic bridge, or a plank, or a few loose stones enabled you to get to the other side. Watercress grew, and wild tangle occasionally obstructed your path. About the middle of the valley, a roadway opened out at right angles, and a farm-house, grey and gloomy, stood on the slope; with a garden and a few trees about it, and sundry barns to be filled with plenty. As we passed through the grounds of the inn, we left a goat on the right and cows to the left, our landlord's property. The goat would scramble up the bank, and, perched on a projecting bit of rock, invariably looked down upon us with suspicion and a wicked expression. Goats *have* a wicked expression. With their horns and hoofs, they closely resemble our ideas of a certain personage seldom mentioned in polite circles.

Beyond this we had to jump a gate. The ravine narrowed. The slopes grew high and heathery, and seemed to sweep away to a great expanse. The valley gained in height and grandeur. Paths, not untrodden but very solitary, led upwards to the tops of high and splendid cliffs. On the left, a long stretch of moorland, terminating in an abrupt precipice overlooking the sea, was called by the undignified, romantically misplaced name of the Hog's Back. Just beyond it was the Creux Terrible: terrible indeed, but not to be visited this morning.

Going on to the end of our valley, we came to a short, steep pathway of rock, and in a few moments the pebbly beach of Dixcart Bay was crunching and crumbling beneath our feet. It was a very small bay, and the incoming tide rolled in quickly. The cliffs were high and almost perpendicular. On one side a natural arch opened out, like a giant's leg, and you might pass through it to other rocks and another little beach. The coast stretched away to the left in bold, high, solitary outlines, point beyond point. Everything was on a grand scale, including the sea, that rolled up so quickly with a swishing sound upon the pebbles, casting up a few stray shells neither curious nor uncommon, and some splendid bits of seaweed.

Sauntering over the Hog's Back, gun in hand, often some way down the cliff and looking as if he had passed beyond the reach of mortal aid, was Philip de Carteret, hunting for rabbits. He afterwards became our guide, and proved an excellent and worthy man. We scrambled

together down the hidden paths of rocks, and he piloted us to unsuspected caves, and gave us many a quaint bit of island lore.

It seems as difficult to begin to sing the praises of Sark, as it was hard to leave the island when that unhappy time came. One's pen should be dipped in sunshine; words should come forth breathing the incense of early morning, the fresh winds of heaven; our page should be made up of sparkling sea, scented moors, rocks and precipices infinitely grand, delicious solitudes, an indescribable charm that Sark alone possesses.

But we are at the end of our space. The winds and the waves are roaring; deep clouds are flying across the heavens; we cannot leave Sark if we would. Here we must rest awhile, in great content, it must be admitted, and endeavour, next month, to get back to Guernsey.

IN THE TWILIGHT.

Far off? Not far away
Lies that fair land;
Shut from the curious gaze by day,
Hidden, but close at hand:—
Let us seek it who may.

Lie by me and hold me, sweet,
Clasp arms and sink;
There needs no weariness of the feet,
Neither to toil nor think;
Almost the pulse may cease to beat.

Eyes made dim, and breathing low,
Hand locked in hand,
Goodly the visions that come and go,
Glimpses of that land,
Fairer than the eyes can know.

Is it not a land like ours?
Nay, much more fair;
Sweeter flowers than earthly flowers
Shed their fragrance there,
Fade not with the passing hours.

Soft are all the airs that blow,
Breathing of love;
Dreamily soft the vales below,
The skies above,
And all the murmuring streams that flow.

No sorrow is there, no sin,
Nor any snare;
And death cannot enter in,
That comes with care,
But rest that is sweet to win.

There are dreams that were dreamed long ago,
Unrealised still;
Though the things that the dreamers foreknow
The years shall fulfil—
The fleet years and slow.

Dreams, memories, hopes that are bright,
And hearts that are young;
All the stars and the glories of night,
All the glories of song;
In that dear land of delight.

Wilt thou seek that land then, sweet
Yea, love, with thee;
Fleet, as thy soul's wings are fleet,
Shall our passage be
Soft, on wings of noiseless beat.

Bid my wings with thine expand;
So may we glide
Into the stillness of that land
Lovingly side by side,
Hopefully hand in hand.

George Cotterell.

THE GHOST OF "OURS."

IT was with unqualified satisfaction that we of the Royal Manx received the news of the return of our second battalion from India.

It involved, as might happen in those days, our breaking up the depôt at Ballynoggin, Ireland, and joining them at Yarnborough: not a popular garrison town in the eyes of any but of those who, like ourselves, had eaten the bread of exile for two long years in "the most disthressful counthry that ever yet was seen."

We entertained the one landed proprietor of the district at mess for the last time, and bade adieu, more or less tenderly, to the two pretty sisters, the beauties of Ballynoggin, who had flirted so gaily and impartially through the whole set of us that even our false Saxon hearts felt that an offer was due to one of them, at least, from somebody, as a bare return for all the entertainment they had afforded. And a burden of obligation was removed when we heard that after all the youngest and prettiest of the family was to accompany us as the bride of our senior captain.

Finally, one bright December morning we marched away with much pomp through the stagnant puddles of the main street of Ballynoggin, escorted by an enthusiastic crowd of five, with one pair of brogues amongst them.

We arrived at Yarnborough a few days before the regiment, took over the barracks and gave ourselves up to the work of settling down. We achieved the feat in due time. Everyone but the Smylies (the captain and his bride before-mentioned): but as, to the best of my belief, they are not settled down yet, that exception need not be dwelt on.

They were the oddest couple. He was a solemn, slow, soft-spoken, elderly officer; a disappointed man; victim of the neglect of those in high quarters, and general ill-luck as regards promotion. How he came to propose to Miss Lavinia McCran, a long-legged school-girl, still in pinafores, and generally known in the family as "Peter," no one could ever guess. He *did* so, the young lady affirmed (to the no slight disgust of her two elder sisters), while seeing her home from church one wet Sunday, under his umbrella, and he hadn't nerve enough to contradict her even if it had not been the case.

I never knew whether he was the happiest or most wretched of men ever after. He adored his "Lally," and waited on her hand and foot, but her sayings and doings caused him anguish acute enough to have shortened the life of another man.

"Mrs. Smylie's last" gave flavour to many a conversation, and the Smylie ménage was the wonder and admiration of the regiment.

There yet lives in my mind the inauguration of the Smylies' quarters, when in the delight of her heart at getting the rooms she had set her fancy on, Mrs. Smylie asked me and half-a-dozen others to come and have tea with her. I obeyed, finding a carpetless room with a roaring fire, at which two young fellows were toasting crumpets on their sword-points.

Tea was set out on Smylie's tub, in every variety of borrowed crockery, while pretty Mrs. Smylie, in a once-brilliant cambric, crushed and collarless, with her golden hair in a towzled tail, laughed and joked and buttered crumpets in total unconsciousness of anything singular in the arrangements.

To us entered Smylie, polite and disconcerted.

"There's your tea, Smylie, dear," said his wife, "but no crumpets! For your life!"

"Thanks," said Smylie, carrying off his cup to the only perch left him: the end of the big iron fender, in dangerous proximity to the steaming spout of a mighty black kettle, garnished with a twist of newspaper round the handle by way of holder. There he sat, solemnly imbibing, only murmuring gently, "Lally, my *dearest*," in a tone of meek expostulation when the fun grew *very* fast and furious. Mrs. Smylie the while rattled on, keeping us in roars of laughter, till in the middle of one anecdote she stopped short.

"Will you look at him! Smylie! Is it mad you are?"

"My dear! I'm all right, I assure you," faltered he in bewilderment.

"Ateing crumpets! and after what Dr. O'Shane has told you! Well, there, I've done! Ate and be sick!"

But to my ghost.

About a week or ten days after my arrival I was dining at mess and found myself between Smylie and one of the new-comers. I had a youngster's natural curiosity on the subject of my brother officers, who were as yet merely names to me. This my neighbour was a smart little man, a mighty talker; the conversation running chiefly on the changes time had made in the regiment since he and Smylie parted in India some five years ago.

"What became of Vandeleur?" asked Captain Loxdale. "He came home when you did."

"I don't know, and never cared to enquire," replied Smylie, shortly; "dead, I believe."

"He was never the same after—you remember Ormsby's affair? Ah! well I could tell you some queer stories of what happened out in India. He was never the same man after. We heard he had joined a Trappist Brotherhood, or something of the sort."

"Ah—just so. Do you like the new ante-room carpet? Too much red in it, isn't there?" was Smylie's somewhat inconsequent response, but Loxdale persevered.

"I don't believe we've heard the last of that story yet, Smylie.

Doesn't it strike you as odd that we should be sent home *here*—to Yarnborough—to the very place where it all happened—at exactly the same time of the year, too?"

"Yes, yes," broke in Smylie, hurriedly. "Manners has left since then; Graves and O'Connor gone, too; all the old set, in fact, except ourselves and the Colonel. Pity to rake up the story."

Smylie looked so unhappy that I wondered at Loxdale's cruelty or obtuseness in pursuing the subject; but he did so, to my secret joy.

"Poor old Ormsby! He *was* a nice lad. I've seen a few young fellows going the same road since, but none that weigh on my mind as he did. I often wonder, Smylie, if we *could* have interfered to any purpose. His face *haunts* me."

Smylie was silent.

"By Jove!" broke out Loxdale, energetically, after a moment's pause. "It was *to-night!* This night ten years, I mean. We were sitting as we are now—you and I, and Vandeleur between us—when I saw Ormsby's face through that window. Hullo! what's that?"

Loxdale sprang from his seat, so did Smylie, who stood for a moment leaning against my chair, which I felt shake with his nervous trembling. Everyone looked at Loxdale, who resumed his seat quietly, merely observing, "Very absurd! a man passed and looked in, so like a fellow I knew—really startled me for the moment."

There was such a dead silence after this apparently-innocent remark, that I could not help noticing it; also that the Colonel had turned in his chair and was glaring ferociously across the table at us.

"Oh, I dare say," broke in a youthful voice belonging to a funny subaltern, whose presence had added another exasperation to the woes of our exile. "As if we didn't know what to expect when *you* came home! Goes with the regimental plate, doesn't he? Accounts for the smell of sulphur and grave-clothes about, doesn't it? Will anyone pass the Holy Water? I feel faint!"

Then followed a chorus of jesting voices, all in reference evidently to some standard joke of which I was ignorant.

Loxdale took it all very calmly. "I suppose it is all very funny," he said, "but I wish someone would explain the joke. *I* only saw a man pass the window."

"So did I," I put in, "a young fellow in mufti."

"*I* saw no one," said Loxdale's other neighbour.

The Colonel sat stolidly scowling through all this. Smylie maintained a dead silence. A few more small jests flashed up here and there, but the fever soon flickered out, quenched by Loxdale's polite imperturbability.

When we rose to leave, Loxdale said, "Just come out here, Smylie, for a few minutes. I want to see if I can find the man who passed just now."

I followed uninvited. The barrack square lay white and empty in the cold moonlight. The space in front of the mess-room windows

was bare and shadowless, and a blaze of gas came through the open door of the orderly-room opposite, through which we could see the orderly-room clerk buttoning himself into his greatcoat before leaving. He turned out his gas and came away as we approached. He had seen nobody. If anybody had been lurking about he must have heard their steps on the gravel. No, he was certain no one had been there.

"He's sharp enough, is Sergeant Druitt, too!" said Loxdale, as we turned away to question the sentry. No results. No one had passed. We looked at one another in bewilderment.

"I saw it most distinctly," I declared. "A young face—light hair, falling in a heavy curl on the forehead—curiously light, luminous eyes—that was all I could make out, except that he wasn't in uniform."

Smylie stopped short with a sort of groan.

"What *does* it mean?" said Loxdale, impatiently. "Laugh if you like, Rivers, but if ever troubled spirit walked this earth it is Harry Ormsby's face that you have seen to-night."

"I *can't* stand it!" Smylie broke in suddenly, in a high-pitched voice, quivering with nervous exasperation. "I'd leave the regiment to-morrow if I were a richer man. I thought we had heard the end of that nonsense years ago! It's *sickening*. Making a laughing-stock of the regiment wherever it goes. They said Vandeleur's brain was giving way, and I don't wonder. *Mine* is."

"What? *You have seen him too?*" asked Loxdale, impressively, his keen little eyes fixed on the other.

"Last night, on our staircase," Smylie began, in a shame-faced, reluctant way. "I could have sworn it was Ormsby. But, for heaven's sake, not a word to my wife," he implored, piteously. "I should *never* hear the end of it."

"None of us ever will hear the end of it, it's my belief," said Loxdale, solemnly. "Do you remember the poor boy's last words to me—that he could not rest quiet in his grave with a disgraced memory?"

"Then why couldn't he stop out of it and clear his memory for himself?" said Smylie, querulously, with some confusion of ideas. "If Lally were to hear of it ——"

"She never shall from me; only—I say, what made you choose those rooms? Don't you know they were Vandeleur's when it all happened?"

"Lally *would* have them," groaned poor Smylie, who had been making his way back to his quarters all this time, and then with a hasty adieu he plunged up the dark staircase and disappeared.

This was the story I heard from Loxdale that same night. Not an uncommon one, except in the sequel. A young, thoughtless boy—watched, guarded, kept out of mischief all his life, till he had no more sense of moral responsibility than a kitten, then turned loose

in the Royal Manx with an extravagant allowance and the worldly knowledge of a schoolboy of ten.

"Every regiment has its black sheep, I suppose," said Loxdale, "and a very sooty one ours was. Despard Vandeleur by name; sounds like the hero of a fashionable novel, doesn't it? He was big, showy, handsome in his way, with a sort of air about him that imposed on women—and men who didn't know him; underneath his veneer an utter blackguard. Ormsby naturally took to him, followed him about, quoted him and imitated him to the best of his ability, while Vandeleur alternately patronised and sneered at him covertly. Well! it was no one's business to interfere. He was old enough to look out for himself, and if he liked Vandeleur and the very shady society that he affected, so much the worse. Yet, as I told Smylie to-night, the thought of what that poor boy might have been saved from, if any of us had made it his business, bothers me often enough now."

"What didn't you save him from?" I asked, for Loxdale had fallen a-meditating.

"Grief—utter! The usual thing. A little high play, a little book-making, a little seeing life under Vandeleur's guidance, and a pot of money gone, and nothing to show for it. His old uncle—did I tell you he was heir to a big property close by: Penderell Court? Old Penderell had brought him up—his uncle paid his debts and set him straight with the world once more, and then ——"

"The relapse, of course," I suggested.

"Vandeleur took care of that," sighed Loxdale.

"Old Mr. Penderell came up to the barracks one morning, looking like a ghost. A cheque, bearing his signature, but which had manifestly been tampered with, had been stopped at the London and Yarnborough Bank. It was paid in by a Frenchman, a friend of Vandeleur's, who had received it the night before from Ormsby in payment of his losses at écarté. It was the clumsiest of forgeries. No man in his sober senses would have attempted it. £200 had been altered to £2,000, evidently, and the cheque presented at the very time Mr. Penderell, a director, was certain to be at the bank. I never liked the old man. He was sour, Puritanical, unforgiving, and his wrath against Ormsby was something unholy. He came to me first—then sent for Vandeleur and Ormsby.

"The latter came in as coolly as possible, nodded to de Barnac—the Frenchman who had come up with old Penderell—and took the affair very easily. It was a mistake from beginning to end. He had never played with de Barnac, never owed or paid him anything. They had met in Vandeleur's rooms the night before, but that was the beginning and end of the acquaintance. I could see that no one but myself believed him for a moment; I did, and do still.

"Then in came Vandeleur, looking so honestly grieved and ashamed that he almost imposed on me for a moment. Old Penderell produced the cheque. Ormsby looked utterly bewildered and stupefied,

but when de Barnac coolly repeated his statement, and Vandeleur confirmed it, letting old Penderell extract the facts as reluctantly as possible, *then* he sank down, crushed and hopeless. I shall never forget the look he fixed on Vandeleur in his despair.

"The affair had been made too public to hush up, and the Colonel was at his wits' end what to do next, when the poor boy saved him all further trouble. That evening when we were at mess I saw Ormsby's face at the window. He looked in on us all with his great, wild, haggard eyes, and disappeared. It was his farewell. His servant had caught him fooling with his pistols that afternoon and stuck to him like wax, but Ormsby was too quick for him. He made off down the back lanes to the river. You know the Yarn flows pretty deep and strong just below the Market Street Bridge, where there are wharves belonging to some disused factory buildings not far from here.

"Before the man could come up with him he saw Ormsby toss his arms in the air, give a sort of a cry, and go in like a stone. There were no boats about or any means of getting at him, and before the river police could be summoned, the body must have been far out at sea.

"It was perhaps as well. An inquest would have been a nuisance to the family; but still—if he had been decently buried: the service read, you know, and that sort of thing—perhaps we shouldn't have had all these queer stories about now."

Loxdale concluded with a bothered look. I pondered over the little history awhile.

"Then you think it was Vandeleur's doing, or the Frenchman's, with his connivance?"

"I do—most certainly. He had his own reasons for wanting Ormsby out of the way. I don't think he quite expected such an end, though."

"Ah! now I comprehend the case—who was She?" I enquired, with youthful cynicism.

"Miss Barbara Dacre, a distant cousin, also brought up by old Penderell. Their marriage was to reconcile conflicting claims to the property. A majestic young creature, with a creamy skin and a fine auburn mane of her own, who carried her chin in the air and looked at us through her black eyelashes as if no man alive was worth the trouble of lifting an eyelid. Harry always seemed devoted enough, but rather afraid of her and Vandeleur—well, as soon as I saw him look at her, I knew evil was brewing.—He gained nothing after all by Ormsby's death, for she would never set eyes on one of us again; shut herself up and nursed the old man over there at Penderell. I suppose he is dead and gone by this time."

Loxdale's story lasted far into the night, and left a queer, eerie feeling on me that hung about me for days. Of course I didn't believe it: but the face at the window? The eyes haunted me with their haggard, wistful gaze. I became impatient of my own fancies and in

search of distraction went to call on Mrs. Smylie. Lally was at home, looking prim and unhappy, sitting bolt upright beside her fire with a lady visitor opposite. I knew her sentiments respecting callers of her own sex (who, she declared to me, "turned up their cold English noses at her"), and pitied her; also her guest, whom I made out by the dim half-light to be a gracious, stately lady, with great, sad eyes and a sweet mouth.

Mrs. Smylie welcomed my entrance with evident relief, and her company manners slipped from her as a garment.

"So you weren't afraid! I thought none of you'd be venturing up *this* way in the dark." I professed polite incomprehension.

"As if I didn't know all about it! Not from Smylie, he's fit to be tied if you joke him about the ghost. Oh! it's a bad way he's in, the poor man!"

"Didn't the crumpets agree with him?" I asked sympathetically. Her eyes danced for a moment.

"If you'd heard him! Tossin' and groanin' and startin' and swearin' that night! But it wasn't all crumpets." She closed her lips and nodded mysteriously. "He'd seen something," she whispered presently. "And Mrs. Dobbins, my laundress, says there's not a man dare be seen on *this* staircase after dark without good reason."

The lady sat silent during this and the subsequent conversation, and at last rose to take leave. I accompanied her down the badly-lighted staircase and was hazarding some very mild little joke upon its evil reputation, when she suddenly stopped—made a catch at the banister, and but for me would have fallen forward. "Did you slip?" I asked anxiously, but she gave no answer, only grasping my arm nervously, and I saw that her eyes were fixed intensely on something at the foot of the stairs.

"Who was that?" she asked in a hoarse, frightened voice.

"There? No one that I can see," I answered.

"There, standing in that corner. I saw him." She suddenly raised herself and hurried down the steps. "He was watching us from the shadow of the door."

"Did he go out?"

"No. Where *can* he be."

I looked round. The door at the foot of the stairs was open to the barrack-yard. On either side were other doors, closed, leading to officers' rooms. The gas was lighted, but burning badly, and the corner she pointed to was in gloom.

"That's Captain Rawlinson's room on that side. Was it anyone going in there?"

She looked doubtful, so I went to explore. Someone was in the room, certainly, but it was only Captain Rawlinson's servant, depositing a load of boots and newly-brushed clothes. *He* had seen no one, so he said. I mentally referred the panic to Lally's spirited

account of "our ghost," and went back to reassure the lady. She thanked me gravely and seemed lost in meditation.

When we arrived at her carriage, which was waiting at the barrack gates, she suddenly stopped and looking full at me with her beautiful grave eyes, said, "I have been wondering whether I should ask you to do me a great service. I know no one here who can help me, and I want very much to hear the whole story of your ghost from beginning to end, for a special reason which I cannot explain."

"I'll tell you all I know and find out all I can for you," I replied with joyful readiness, wondering at my own good luck. "But when?"

"Will you come and see me some day? I am Miss Dacre, of Penderell Court, and Harry Ormsby was my dearest friend."

I devoted myself enthusiastically to the mission and watched her drive away feeling—well—that after all there was something to be said for Vandeleur. "Think of a man making away with himself, while there was a creature like that in the world to live for!" I remarked to nobody in particular, and to lose no moment in fulfilling her behest, returned at once to the Smylies. Hearing through the door, however, Smylie's voice thundering forth a sort of Commination Service, including laundresses, ghosts and barrack gossip in its clauses, with piteous responses from Lally at intervals, "How would I know it was she? Sure, I'll go ask her pardon to-morrow, poor creature," I thought it discreet to withdraw.

Had Loxdale any more to tell, I wondered. I went to him and told him frankly of my meeting with and promise to Miss Dacre. He looked at me in blank amazement.

"Miss Dacre! Calling on the Smylies! Wanting to rake up all the old scandal again! I'll be shot if I can understand it." However, he searched for and gave me a shabby little note. "She may have *that*, if she likes. It was found on his table when his servant gave the alarm, addressed to me, and another to his uncle." I glanced over it. It was a pitiful little appeal to his only friend left to try and clear his memory when he was dead and gone. Life was too hard for him now. He was going to find a short way out of all his troubles, but he did not know how he should rest in his grave leaving a disgraced name behind him.

"Don't you think it was his use of that expression that set the whole story afloat," I asked; "and then some chance resemblance completed the mystification—some one in the town getting a rise out of you all?"

"Not possible," said Loxdale, decidedly. "Ormsby was a singular-looking boy, with wild, light eyes and hair that he *would* wear longer than he should have done, and Vandeleur was a man who never forgot a face. It was a strange gift he possessed. When he got his company he knew the name and number of every man in it in three days, and once sat at the barrack gate for a wager, and told the name and number of every man who went in and out in the course

of an hour, and was only wrong once. No, *he* was safe to make no mistake; and he got into such a queer state that he dare not be alone for a moment. I felt utterly savage with myself the other night at mess, when I started up and sang out, for, as I did so, I recollected Van doing the very same thing the night before we left for India. He never would sit facing those windows if he could help it. Accidental likeness! Why, he had detectives down from London scouring the place to find anyone likely to indulge in such a hoax—and *they* gave up the business in despair."

I still looked incredulous. Loxdale went on more and more impressively.

"Believe me or not, as you like. It was *killing* Vandeleur. He looked another man when we got to India, and everybody forgot the story. We were sent to Secunderabad in the course of a year or two, and one night he was sitting with me on the steps of the verandah of my bungalow—I don't know what had brought him on that occasion, for we didn't care to see much of one another usually—but there he was. It was moonlight, clear enough to show every leaf on the rose trees in the compound, and still enough, except for the hideous row of the jackals now and then, to hear a tread on the path had there been one. We were both smoking in silence when I heard Ormsby's voice, 'Loxdale, I say, Loxdale!' close behind me, and Vandeleur jumped up and stood all white and shaking. 'There he is!' he said, pointing over my shoulder, but not a creature could I see. Vandeleur couldn't stand it, and sold out soon after."

I thanked Loxdale and departed, puzzled but unconvinced, in search of other ghost seers. As usual, I came across any number of men who knew the man who had seen it; and one ghost story is very like another when details are required. Ormsby's servant had met him at the door of his room "dead and dripping" the very night he was drowned, and had incontinently thrown down a can of hot water and fled. Two other men had seen him, always at night, and under circumstances unfavourable to recognition; half a dozen others had "heard tell of him." Altogether I had but a meagre report to take with me to Miss Dacre.

Penderell Court is a mouldy, melancholy old place, smothered in ivy up to the chimney-pots, and its mistress looked unspeakably forlorn sitting at one end of a dark, panelled room, and a long bare table down the middle, and rows of chairs at each side. She received me very graciously and sweetly. Her companion, a deaf old lady, was sitting knitting in a basket-chair by the window, and, after the first few words of introduction, made no attempt to join in the conversation.

I told my story. Miss Dacre listened sadly, great tears gathering in her eyes when I produced her cousin's last few words. "If he would but have trusted me!" she sighed.

Her attention grew keener and keener as I went on, a pretty pink

flush rose to her cheeks and her breath came fast. "The fellows say Loxdale never used to believe a word of the story," I concluded, "but just now he has gone in for spiritualism, and this seemed an illustration ready made to his hand, so he has taken it up and makes the most of it."

She rose without replying and opened a door into another room, evidently her own special sitting-room, only a shade less dreary than the one we had quitted. The whole house seemed in some inexplicable manner to be in mourning.

"I have something to show you," she said, and I followed. Directly facing me was a full-length portrait of an officer in our uniform. I stopped short involuntarily.

"You know him?" she asked eagerly.

"That's the face that looked in through the mess-room window. I could swear to it!"

"He is alive! I know it! I have felt it all these years." And with a cry of thanksgiving, she sank down sobbing hysterically.

Here a peal of the jangling door-bell went echoing through the house, and the old staghound that lay in the hall gave one big bark. Miss Dacre dried her eyes rapidly at the sound of voices and approaching footsteps and smiled kindly at me.

"I am sure you will not fail me," she began, but I interrupted her.

"I'll find him! Trust to me, Miss Dacre. If he's on earth, I'll run him down and bring him back to you."

She gave me a sweet, thankful look and pressed my hand. "Mrs. Smylie" was announced, and we returned to the other room to find Lally woebegone and penitent. I left her to make her peace with Miss Dacre, and departed brimful of hope and invention.

I soon found myself at the limits of both. For weeks after, I made a rigorous search for all who had been in the regiment in Ormsby's time, with small result. Most were dispersed, discharged or dead, or else knew nothing about him.

Per contra, my questions had stirred up a hornet's nest amongst the officers. The story was revived, discussed, amplified, till I hated the name of Ormsby. We became haunted with a vengeance now. It grew to a gigantic nuisance at last. If the interest could have exhaled itself in "chaff," there would have been an end of it sooner or later, but the Colonel persisted in regarding it as a personal question, and was prepared to resent any remarks of a sportive or derisive nature.

The very core and centre of the whole agitation was little Mrs. Smylie. She had conceived the wildest, most unreasoning attachment to Miss Dacre, and I suppose the attraction was mutual, for the carriage from the Court was thenceforth constantly to be seen at our gates, conveying Lally to or from the object of her devotion. What she did when she got to Penderell, I never could imagine, but she

came home every time brimming over with sympathy and admiration for her new friend.

"It's ateing her heart out with sorrow, she is! How would he rest aisy in his grave, I'd like to know, and she breaking her heart with the shame of his death."

Her vivid Irish imagination was captivated by the romance of the situation, and Smylie might scold, entreat, implore. Talk about the ghost, she would and did, till a greater and more personal cause of excitement absorbed her.

We were all startled by three pieces of news in rapid succession.

"Smylie was going. Had sent in his papers."

"Smylie's old aunt had died, and left him a lot of money."

"Smylie's cousin, a noble lord, who had never taken the slightest notice of him before, was going out as governor of St. Domingo, and taking Smylie as his private secretary."

It was all true, and before we had time to realise it, they were gone.

But we had not heard the last of them or the ghost; far from it.

About a week after they left I received a polite note from Colonel Tremlett, requesting my presence at his house that afternoon.

I found myself in company with half-a-dozen officers, including Loxdale, all as ignorant as myself of the motive of the summons. The Colonel entered, looking solemn and puzzled, holding a mighty envelope, directed, I saw, in Smylie's writing, and, after briefly saying that he hoped for our advice and assistance in a difficult and delicate business, read as follows:

"DEAR COLONEL TREMLETT,—Before leaving England I wish in justice to the memory of a dead brother officer, to put you in possession of some facts respecting him, of which you may make any use that you think proper.

"I must first explain the reasons which have hitherto kept me silent on the subject.

"I was a poor man, entirely dependent on some relations who viewed card-playing and gambling as unpardonable breaches of morality, and to have confessed my intimacy with Captain Vandeleur would have been simply ruin. Also, it was not till after the death of Lieut. Ormsby that I heard that my testimony would have been of any service to him."

I condense the rest. Smylie admitted that he had been in Vandeleur's room with some others on the night in question. Fell asleep on a sofa, awoke to find Ormsby and Vandeleur talking about a cheque which the former had paid. "It's £200—all I can give, you know," he said, "I daren't ask my uncle again to help me. You shall have the rest next month." Smylie thought it odd as Ormsby hadn't been playing, but was too sleepy to say anything; in fact, fell asleep directly. He woke again and

saw Vandeleur and de Barnac busy with writing materials at a table, and he saw the Frenchman hold up a cheque against the light for a moment. They were speaking French; he didn't understand them, and got up and left them. He was too seedy next morning to remember much of what had passed. He supposed Ormsby never noticed his presence at all. All this was spun out by Smylie's explanations and justifications to an inordinate length, but that was the purport.

I asked permission to copy it there and then, and did so, while the others debated what use should be made of it. We separated at last, without quite seeing our way to do anything, except that Colonel Tremlett intended to ride over to Penderell to consult Miss Dacre.

I made up my mind to be beforehand with him, and pocketing the precious document, started at once. I should be in reasonable time for a call, if I made haste. So to economise time I took what I fancied would prove a short cut straight through the back slums of Yarnborough, into a region of factories, warehouses and small waterside dwellings; finding myself at last, sure enough, in a direct line for Penderell, but a mile or so lower down the river than the last bridge.

There was nothing for it but to make my way along the riverside to it, and turning to do so, I caught sight of a broad grey back in uniform great coat just before me. I recognised Sergeant Druitt, and was just on the point of calling to him, when the sight of his companion checked me. I followed them closely. They stopped and parted at the door of a small public house, and after one good look at the stranger's face, I started after Druitt at full speed, and caught him at the next turning.

"Who's that?" I asked, out of breath.

Druitt looked surprised, but answered, innocently enough, "An old friend of mine, sir. Bird, of the Artillery—that is, he has just been discharged. He is going to America in a few days."

"What's he doing here?"

"He's down here saying good-bye to his relations, sir. His uncle, I believe, a very old man, lives close by, and he's staying at the Fisherman's Rest."

"Where did you meet him?" I asked, with less eagerness.

"Well, sir, we first became acquainted on board the troop-ship, going out to India, when I went out with a draft to join the Royal Manx, at Secunderabad."

"Secunderabad!" I gasped, feeling as if I had just "cornered" my man in an exciting game of blindman's buff, and the next thing was to hold him tight and identify him, if he didn't slip through my fingers first.

"What was he doing at the barracks the other night?" I asked, sharply. "*I* saw him."

Sergeant Druitt looked awkward, then said, deprecatingly:

"He wasn't doing any harm, sir. He'd been in my office for some time and just stepped across to look in at the mess-room window, and then he said Captain Loxdale had seen him and begged me to say nothing; so I just turned the gas out and left him in my office, when you came up, sir. You see," Druitt continued, confidentially, "I somehow fancied he'd been a swell out of luck and might have known some of you once."

Druitt had hardly finished speaking before I was on my way to the bar of the Fisherman's Rest. An elderly, decent landlady directed me to Mr. Bird's room overhead. I found my way, knocked gently, and entered without ceremony, for I felt that all I had to do must be done at white heat. If I stopped to cool, all was lost.

The occupant of the room was sitting writing, with his back turned to me. He rose and looked round, much amazed, as I entered, looking on closer inspection not nearly so like the face in my mind as I had fancied; also, which disconcerted me greatly, he was much older than I. I had not realised that ten years had elapsed since Harry Ormsby was a heedless youngster.

However, I said, "Mr. Bird, I believe," and went on to introduce myself; and, the first plunge over, found myself lying with an ease and fluency that justified the popular comparison.

"I believe you are able to give me news of a very old friend of mine, Mr. Ormsby, of my regiment, the Royal Manx."

He gave me a stare of incredulity, and then a rapid glance at the door. "A friend of *yours*—I—really don't know any such person."

"He disappeared," I went on to say, "but one at least of his friends has never given up the hope of his return, and it is on her behalf I am here to-day."

"I am sorry I cannot assist you," said Bird, briefly, as he turned to his writing with a suggestive movement. "Good-day, sir."

I wasn't going, not a bit of it, if I stayed there arguing the point of his identity all night.

"I have a letter here for him of the greatest importance, and give it to him I must, somehow. A confession and justification."

Bird was turning over his papers with his long, sensitive, lady's fingers: I saw them twitch nervously. If he had maintained his indifferent demeanour I should have been puzzled what to say further, but he turned a little and said over his shoulder: "I have given you your answer, Mr. Rivers. I don't know why you persist in applying to me," and then I saw his large blue eyes wander round and fix themselves hungrily on the big, blue envelope. I marched up to him:

"Read that, and see for yourself," and I opened it out and laid it on the table in front of him.

He did read it, his face turned away from me. I let him get to the last page and then spoke.

"Bird of the Artillery, if you are not Harry Ormsby, or his ghost

what, in the name of all that is iniquitous do you mean by conducting yourself as if you were one or the other? Your conduct is equally indefensible, whichever you are. If you were only the ghost it would be bad enough to haunt your own regiment till you gave it a bad name; but if you are the real living man, and can let the sweetest woman in England fret herself into her grave for your shabby sake ——"

"Stop there! You know nothing about it!" said he, turning sharp upon me. "What an impudent young beggar you are!" he went on, half laughing. "I give up. I must trust myself to you; you are a gentleman, and will respect my secret."

"No, I will *not*," I said, sturdily. "I've promised Miss Dacre to find you and bring you home, and I'd betray any amount of confidence sooner than disappoint her."

"To find me? How did you know I was alive? What business is it of yours?"

I gave him a rapid sketch of her situation, during which, he paced the tiny room uneasily, looking miserably helpless and undecided.

"There's only one thing to be done now," I concluded. "To come away with me to Penderell at once. The longer you delay the worse it will look. Come."

I handed him his hat and he got himself into his coat in a mazy, somnambulistic fashion, and led the way down stairs. I linked my arm in his directly we got outside, and looked about for a cab. None was to be seen, so I walked him briskly along the water-side path to the bridge. We had to cross a disused, shabby little wharf, green and rotting. I felt him wince.

"How were you saved?" I asked, in a casual tone. "We all know how you got in, but why didn't you drown."

"I couldn't make up my mind to it," he replied, frankly enough. "I went in as resolutely as anybody; but the water was cold and smelt of drainage. Staying in it was not to be thought of, so I swam up to a barge, got put on shore and made my way to my old nurse's. She married a warehouseman, and lived near here. I thought no one need ever know of my performance, and then suddenly recollected the letters I had left in my room, so I bolted up to the barracks forthwith. I found that my things had all been overhauled and the letters taken. Then I came across my servant, who called upon all the saints 'to stand between us,' and ran; so I thought as I was supposed to be dead, to let it rest so, for a few days at least. I did hang about and try to catch Loxdale. If I could have seen him, and talked it over, it would have been all right. Then I found the police were after me. My poor old nurse got in an awful panic, made me lie close and disguise myself with cropped hair and black eyebrows for days; till the regiment left, in fact; and then came the question, what to do next?"

"Wouldn't your uncle have helped you?" I asked, more to keep

the conversation alive than for information. We had got out of the town now and were striding across the dewy pastures in a line for the spire of Penderell Church.

"My uncle! not he. He was only too glad of the excuse for turning me adrift. I mean the excuse for himself to his own conscience. He would have done it before, but for her, *she* stood by me and pulled me through the first mess I got into. I think I hear him now, 'I've Scriptural warrant for what I am doing' (that was signing a big cheque with the Bible opened at the Prodigal Son, ready for the evening's exposition, before him); 'but remember, sir, even your prototype, with all his assurance, *didn't try it on twice.*'"

Ormsby stopped to laugh at the recollection. He had a boyish laugh and a boyish face under all his Indian sunburn. I wanted to hate and despise him, but couldn't somehow, especially when his face fell suddenly and his voice quavered.

"Think of her ever wishing to see me again, believing in me all through! I tell you, Rivers, it was just the thought of her that drove me away. I *knew* she'd stand by me and I couldn't drag her into disgrace; so when the regiment left I just borrowed the railway fare from old nurse, ran up to town and enlisted in the Artillery. It seemed the one thing left to me."

"How have you got out again," I asked naturally enough, "before your time was up?"

"The poor old woman was so miserable at my being a common soldier that she lent me all her savings to purchase my discharge, and that is how I came to be here again, with the regiment. It seems like a fatality! I never calculated on being sent out to India to the same station. As soon as I saw them at Secunderabad all my old troubles seemed to start up again. I could have murdered Vandeleur if I had met him alone, and I felt mad to hear the voice of an old friend again. That was how I came to be hanging about Loxdale's bungalow one night—but when I saw that other man there I made off, I don't know how; I dared not trust myself within reach of him."

Ormsby strode along in savage silence for some moments. The twilight fell, and Penderell Church was looming dark and near: below it, in the valley, twinkled the lights of Penderell Court.

Thinking over his story as I glanced askance at him, I understood somehow, even in that short acquaintance, how he came to fall into trouble so easily and pass through it so lightly.

"Her strong nature will supplement his; his loveable, light-heartedness will put sunshine into her life. They will be happy at last," I mused.

I couldn't feel greatly elated at my achievement. I had done it all for her sake as I should have done any mortal thing she asked me, but it was at a cost to myself that I could not reckon ungrudgingly. We passed through a little wicket gate in the park paling into the

shadow of the pine-wood that surrounded the Court, in silence, out on to the dew-drenched moonlit lawn and across it to the deep ivy-veiled porch.

"Stop!" said Ormsby, as I laid my hand on the bell. "It will be too sudden for her. I had better wait—wait and write to her."

For all answer I gave an echoing peal. The door opened and we stood within the dim, cavernous hall. Opposite to us was the open door of the room where I had parted from her. The fire blazed high, and full in its light I saw her for the last time, her golden head bending over her book. I drew Ormsby gently forward, let him pass into the room, and closed the door on him and on the romance of my life.

The three extracts following may end my story.

"My dear Mr. Rivers,—You know that Penderell Court is sold and our name effaced from the list of county families, but you must not suppose that so our friendship ends. We leave England next month for Canada, where a new Penderell Court is to arise, to which we hope to welcome you some day. I write to ask you for one more friendly service—to be the one guest at our quiet wedding in London next week—Mr. Ormsby-Dacre and I both feel that there are thanks due to you that we must pay in person. I will leave him to add his entreaties to mine."

"Dear Old Man,—Isn't she an angel of wisdom and goodness! She knew I could never hold up my head with the rest of those stiff, prejudiced old county folks, who would never understand the rights of my story if we proclaimed it from the Market Cross; so she gives up everything to make a fresh start with me in a new country. With a new name, new friends, a new wife, and an old love, if I don't make a new man of myself my name isn't

"Yours very faithfully,

"H. Ormsby-Dacre."

"My dear Mr. Rivers,—You will have got my dear Smylie's letter by this time, and I'm just dying to hear what you all think of it. I cried for joy when I read it! Didn't he tell it beautifully? and wasn't it noble of him to come forward, after going through so much, keeping the secret all these years?

"To finish the whole thing *properly*, Miss Dacre ought to marry one of you; but, indeed, I don't know a man in the Royal Manx good enough for her, except my own dear husband, and he's out of it.

"In haste, yours sincerely,

"Lavinia Smylie.

"P.S. Let me know if any of you ever see the ghost again."

But we never did.

A PLATONIC ATTACHMENT.

A GARDEN—a garden of flowers. One of the quaintest, sweetest, most old-fashioned ever seen in these degenerate latter days: redolent of moss-roses, lavender, mignonette and gilliflowers; gay to gorgeousness with stately hollyhocks, sunflowers, and huge tree peonies.

It was by mere accident I chanced upon this garden: one of those accidents that come about so simply, yet lead to so much.

I was attracted by the scent of a sweetbriar hedge, protected only by a low paling from the road; then looking across the fence, I espied this lovely wilderness of flowers. I forgot I was wearied with long walking, forgot the sun was setting, and that I had lost my way; forgot everything, except that I must find an entrance to this earthly paradise. A few paces on I did discover it. A rustic gate opened on to a gravel path leading to a low-built house of dull red brick—that mellowed tint so dear to the artistic mind. Straw and matting littered the gravel walk; the flower beds there were trampled with the print of many feet; every window of the house was open wide. A waggon laden with furniture passed out as I entered. A woman standing at the door seemed to be watching the departure of the waggon. She did not notice my approach, and, on observing her more closely, I saw that she was gazing straight out into the sunset, lost in thought.

She was a woman numbering sixty years, but fresh and comely, save that now her face was clouded with sadness.

"Ah me! To think that it is ended now—all ended!"

Something in her look, and the tone in which she said these words impelled me to remain—to speak to her. Laying a hand upon her arm: "You are sad. Can I do anything for you?" I asked, timidly.

She neither started nor showed surprise at being accosted by a stranger. She turned her eyes on me, and I saw they were red with weeping.

"Aye! I'm sad enough. But there's nothing you can do, my honey, thank you, kindly."

"My honey!" It was a north-country expression which I had lately heard for the first time.

"I'm very weary with walking. May I sit down in the porch and rest?" I asked.

"Aye, rest and welcome. Foot-weary? It's a weary world for some people. A world in which everything goes wrong ——"

She took my sketching materials from my hand, laying them on a rustic table near, then she turned, went leisurely down the gravel path and closed the gate, returning to the porch. I made room for her

beside me. She sat down; her hands lay listless on her lap, and her eyes wore a far-away look that told of a world of sadness pent up in their depths.

"What a beautiful garden that is at the side of the house," I observed by way of interesting her. "The late dweller here must have been a passionate lover of flowers."

"You'll be a stranger to these parts?" she asked. I mentioned that I came the previous day to the neighbouring village, and was leaving on the morrow.

"Captain Carey," she said, somewhat abruptly, "lived here for many years—fifteen—I was his housekeeper, until ——"

"Until he changed his residence?"

"He's dead," she said, laconically.

Presently she enquired:

"Which way did you come? By Ashley Wood and over Threpton Common? Then you'd pass a stone cross just as you came off the common, with initials on it and a date?"

"Yes."

"They were his initials, and it was there he died."

"I feel strangely interested," I said. "Will you tell me all there is to tell?"

"Yes. Since you seem to mind. How better could I pass the time? It will not take long to tell. Fifteen years ago my dear master came here and engaged me as his housekeeper. He was forty-five years old. He had been in the Royal Navy, and people wondered that a sailor should choose this out-of-the-way inland country place; but when they saw the pleasure he took in his garden, in the cultivation of his flowers and shrubs, they thought they understood. But they were wrong. *I* found out his secret long before the country people had suspected there was anything particular that drew him to this spot. The attraction was a woman of about his own age, and that woman one of the greatest ladies in the land. Her husband—don't fear; there is nothing in the whole sad history, thank God, that will not bear the light of day. If there were, do you think I would speak of it when *he* was my dear master? The lady's husband—as I was about to say—was Earl of Dayshire—king, as it were, of all this country—she, of course, was countess."

My eyes, following the direction of the speaker's, rested on a castle, distant some two or three miles, which I had seen and made a sketch of in the afternoon.

"Yes," she answered in reply to my unspoken thoughts, "when he was not minding his flowers, or walking or riding on the road that leads to the castle, he sat here where he could see the place she lived in, framed by the porch as though it were a picture. Ten years ago the Countess became a widow, and then I thought — no matter what I thought! Death is the only leveller it seems, not love. The Countess knew everyone to speak to for miles around. She would

not pass a living being on the road, man, woman or child, but she stopped on some pretext to speak. She was not strong; she would drive in her carriage, sometimes getting out to walk, for, say half a mile, along the road. It was at these times she spoke to any passers-by. Sometimes she met my master and lingered talking with him by the paling beside the sweetbriar hedge. Apparently they spoke but of the flowers. At other times, if she passed when he was in the garden, he would touch tenderly with his hand, this flower or that; and she outside the fence would bow her head or smile and say some words heard by him only. This I have seen happen before the earl's death; afterwards —— "

She paused. I would not interrupt by word or gesture.

"Afterwards," she continued, "there was a long space of time that she was absent, travelling abroad; but she returned at last to the castle, which, not being the grandest of the late earl's many seats, was to be hers for life. My dear master used often to travel that road in vain. I knew how to read in his face as in a printed book when he had seen the Countess and when not.

"One day—it must have been a year after she became a widow—I heard the sound of a carriage driving slowly along the road. Looking out, I recognised the horses and the liveries of the Countess.

"The master, I knew, was in the garden repairing a bit of fence close to the road. I saw the tall, stately figure of the Countess, clad in widow's weeds, walk slowly past. She paused where my master was busy with the fence. The instant he knew she was there he stood erect, and, raising his hat above his head, held it there during the few minutes that they talked together. The top of his head was quite bald, but it was a noble head, though I do say it. While speaking, the Countess broke off a little slip of sweetbriar, and when she bowed and turned away still held it in her hand. He stood uncovered, watching her till she was out of sight.

"This I believe to have been their first meeting since her widowhood.

"Afterwards they met more frequently. There were certain flowers the Countess had admired, and from time to time my master's groom took roots, and seeds, and cuttings to the castle. Occasionally, too, a basket of choice fruit or hot-house flowers came 'With the Countess of Dayshire's compliments' written on a card attached. As years rolled on the intimacy grew. There never was company at the castle, nor a garden-party, but the master was invited. He had a bright and cheery manner, always ready to do what was wanted or to speak a pleasant word.

"By this time everybody knew of the friendship between the two. They called it a 'platonic attachment,' laughing good-humouredly whenever the name was mentioned of the Countess or the Captain. I ought to have told you, if you have not guessed it, that she was

quite old-fashoned in all her ways—as old-fashioned as my master's flower-garden, so I've heard said. At all events, they seemed to suit each other, these two, and this went on ten years.

"Two months ago—it was in May; I know the day, the date, the hour—the master stood here in the porch. His favourite mare—'the Lady Charlotte' named after the Countess—was at the door, led by the groom. The master was putting on his gloves, humming to himself the while his favourite sea song, 'Poor Tom Bowling.'

"'Mrs. Wilton, will you kindly sew a button on this glove?' he asked, seeing me cross the hall.

"'Thanks, thanks,' he said, when a minute or two later I returned. 'I could not have gone to see my lady with a buttonless glove!'

"'Would she have remarked it, sir?' I asked.

"He smiled, stooped, gathered a lily of the valley, and as he placed it in his button-hole, looked at me with a quick, bright, meaning glance.

"'Well, yes, she would,' he answered, and, raising his foot to the stirrup, was into his saddle in a moment, with all the activity of twenty years ago. I watched him ride out of the gate and listened to the last sound of his horse's feet dying away in the far distance. The sun shone, the sky was blue, the birds sang in the branches—the song my master loved echoing in my ears. He had sung it cheerily, cheerily—and yet it was a sad one!

"It seems, as I learned afterwards, the Countess had not been well the day before, and all night felt ill and feverish; for hours she lay awake, and when sleep came it brought a dream—a dream that filled her mind with fear and strange forebodings of some coming trouble.

"Such an impression did the dream make on her that she could not close her eyes without seeming to see it again and again. In the morning she was too ill and exhausted to rise, but, bidding her maid bring writing materials, she sat up in bed and wrote to my dear master in these words:

"'DEAR FRIEND,—I knew not that I was superstitious, but last night I had a painful dream concerning you. You remember the picture in the Academy, which, in the opening day, we stood contemplating so long together, and which we both so much admired; the title of it: "Home they Brought her Warrior Dead!" In my dream I seemed to see that picture, but *the face of the dead warrior was yours.* It has affected me deeply, but my trust is in God that he will watch over you so that my ill dream may be no portent of any evil to you. To-morrow I hope to be well enough to see you, and in that hope, I am, as ever, yours in all friendship.

'CHARLOTTE D.

'P.S. I pray you send a few lines to say if all be well with you?'

"Arrived at the castle, my master was told the Countess was not well enough to see him; but the letter which she had written was given to

him with a message to the effect that he need not read it until he reached home. He put it in his pocket, and, looking up at the castle as he rode out of the courtyard, saw a hand—which he knew well to be that of the Countess—wave a handkerchief from an upper window.

"There is not much more to tell," Mrs. Wilton continued after a slight pause, during which she seemed trying hard to subdue her emotion. "The hours went by, and he returned; but not riding blithely and singing as he went. A boy from the village came running first to tell me there had been an accident, that my master was ill, hurt, dying—I know not what. I ran down to the gate, and saw coming along the road a little crowd. Two men carried between them some hurdles on which a body lay. The face was covered, but when they came quite near, I saw the crushed and faded lily in the coat. I knew the doctor who was walking by the side: 'Dead, quite dead when I found him lying in the road,' he said, and pointed to the mare, who, led by a groom, formed one in the melancholy procession. Her knees bore marks on them as though she had been down. I took the faded flower from my master's breast, and have it now. The face even in death was smiling. God only knows how the fatal accident happened, or whether he had read the letter. It was found in his pocket, and the seal was broken."

"And the Countess?"

"Oh, she was very ill. I believe she felt it keenly. She had the cross put where he fell. But—'noblesse oblige' they say," she added, a little bitterly.

"And—and *you?*"

"I?" she cried, with a sudden start and shiver, "I? Oh, do not think of me. I have lived fifteen years here now. Fifteen! But I have a brother in Australia. I go to him to-morrow. See! There are the lights shining in the castle windows. The Countess is there. One of the gardeners was at the sale to-day and bought some of the best flowers; and a maid came, too, and bought some bits of china for her lady. What! are you going? Oh, I had forgotten! It is nearly dark, and you have a long walk before you. You took the wrong turn. Go back a hundred yards the way you came and you will find yourself on the right road to the village. Your sketch book is here."

While speaking in a rapid and excited manner, she walked with me to the gate and opened it.

"Good-bye, my honey."

A lump rose in my throat; I could not speak, but turning quickly, kissed her on the lips. A moment more, by the low rustic fence, I broke off a twig of sweetbriar as I passed, and kept it to recall the memory of that garden and the story told me in the porch.

E. M. Davy.

M. ELLEN STAPLES. R. AND E. TAYLOR.

THEY STOOD TOGETHER AT THE WINDOW.

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1884.

THE WHITE WITCH.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT SIR WILLIAM HUNT'S.

MATTERS of more kinds than one were making havoc of the mind of Godfrey Mayne, puzzling him nearly out of his reason. What could it have been that so terrified Mary Dixon in the parlour at the Abbey Farm?—and in what lay the mystery connected with Sir William Hunt?

Strolling about the garden in meditative soliloquy the day after Mary's fright had occurred, he gave the reins to his thoughts.

Had Mary's nervous fears overcome her, had she even fancied that she saw the ghost of the dead monk—for it is well-known what absurd tricks the nerves are ready to play us at certain times and seasons—she would certainly have rushed from the room, reasoned Godfrey; she would have cried out to himself and Nancy for protection—they were not beyond hearing. Instead of that, she seemed to be herself afraid of being seen; to be hiding herself from somebody's sight. Had she been seized with fright at suddenly seeing Dick Wilding?—who confessed to have looked in at the window. But in that case, as with regard to the monk, she would surely have run out of the room, not have taken refuge under the cover of the side-table. The more Godfrey thought of it, the less could he make of it: and what he also deemed very strange indeed was, that Miss Dixon did not attempt to give any explanation of the source of the alarm when they were walking home together.

The affair touching Sir William Hunt did not puzzle him as much. It was not impossible that Mrs. and Miss Dixon might have been acquainted with Sir William in the past, that from some cause or other they were not now friendly, and that Mrs. Mayne wished to avoid meeting him again. It was also possible—Godfrey mentally confessed it—that his own suspicions had arisen without due

foundation, and that neither mother nor daughter wished to avoid meeting Sir William. The last doubt would be speedily set at rest, for this was the day of the dinner at Goule Park. If the two ladies went to it, it would be a proof that all was right; if they did not go, why, then the burning question would remain—why did they stay away?

Evening approached. In his restless impatience, Godfrey was ready before anybody else, and paced the drawing-room while waiting: one instant laughing at the mystery he had conjured-up; the next, anticipating the meeting with Sir William. In his excitement he forgot completely for the time that it could not make any difference to him, the promised husband of Elspeth Thornhill, whether Miss Dixon were saint or sinner.

At last he heard steps and voices in the hall. Opening the door, he met his father, looking very uneasy and downcast, and Miss Dixon in a magnificent lemon-coloured silk gown; but without gloves, flowers or ornaments.

"Here's a terrible state of things!" cried out Mr. Mayne, piteously. "My wife has a nervous attack, brought on by the thunder this afternoon!"

"Thunder!" exclaimed Godfrey. "There has not been any thunder—except a very little in the distance."

"But that frightened her, it seems; made her think we might have a storm before we got back again! And she says that she should die if a storm overtook us when we were driving at night. So she won't go. When I tried to persuade her, she nearly went into hysterics."

"But that is nonsense," said Godfrey, impatiently, his suspicions in full force. "It must be all fancy; we sha'n't have a storm: she ought to go, father."

"My dear Godfrey," said his father, surprised at his vehement tone, "if I cannot persuade her, nobody else can. Come; we must start: we are late, as it is."

"But, Miss Dixon—she is going!" cried Godfrey. For the girl had turned to go upstairs.

"No, she stays at home also. Her mother will not spare her."

But Godfrey went past him and laid his hand on Miss Dixon's arm, his face and voice resolute. "What does this mean?" said he, in a low, hard tone. "Why do you avoid this? You shall go."

"Godfrey!" reproved his father, in surprise. "You are forgetting yourself. What business is it of yours? You are frightening Mary, too, see. Go upstairs to your mother, my dear. And Godfrey, come along at once; don't stand there looking angry."

Casting at him a dumb, beseeching glance from her sad brown eyes, Mary went upstairs. Godfrey followed his father into the carriage, and sat perfectly deaf to his comments on his amazing conduct. Mr. Mayne was not sorry to find vent for his annoyance at his wife's unreasonable caprice. But the young man's brain was reeling

with wild conjectures and misgivings, and he heard not a word of the lecture.

Mary returned to her mother's dressing-room as the carriage drove away. It was a little room opening from the bed-chamber, used by Mrs. Mayne as a sitting, or working-room, not as a dressing-room, though called so.

"Mary," she faltered, as her daughter entered, "what is to be done? I cannot think what will become of us. Suppose Sir William gets talking about the past this evening?"

"And if he does!" cheerfully replied the girl, who believed it to be her duty above all things to comfort her sorrowing mother. "It will not affect us—it will not afford any clue to the past."

"One can never be sure," moaned Mrs. Mayne. "My whole life is one prolonged torment from fright, since I knew Sir William's place was in this neighbourhood. He would not recognise you, I suppose; but he would me. Good heavens, what is to be done?"

"Well, mamma, you must endeavour to keep out of his sight while they are in the neighbourhood. In a short time he and Lady Hunt leave again, and then all danger will be over."

"For the present; only for the present. Oh, my child, what will become of me? I shall never know peace again."

"You may know it better than I shall," thought Mary, sadly.

"Sir William might recognise your singing; take care of that," said Mrs. Mayne. "He heard it, you know, that day ——"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Mary, with a shiver. "Mamma, I shall not be likely to sing where he can hear me."

"You must never sing again," cried Mrs. Mayne, almost fiercely in her eagerness. "It was most imprudent to sing to Godfrey. To let him know that you have such a voice."

"I don't see why. He will not talk of it. I dare say I shall not sing to him again. And now, mamma, I shall tell Lydia to bring you some tea, while I go and take off this grand dress. After that I will read to you, and we will spend a pleasant evening together."

In all this there had been an assumption of lightness in the girl, which was perhaps a little overdone. It struck Mrs. Mayne so, and she caught Mary's hand to detain her.

"Mary, what is it? All day long you have put on a carelessness of speech and manner, done, I am sure, to hide some special anxiety and restlessness. Has anything happened that I don't know of? One would say you went in more than ordinary fear."

Very rapidly a flush passed over Mary's face, leaving it paler than before. But she smiled as if she were at ease.

"How observant you are growing, mamma! There's nothing. Truth to say, I had last night a—a very disagreeable dream, and I can't forget it."

"A dream! That we had been tracked at last?"

"Worse than that."

"Worse than that! Why, what could be worse?" added Mrs. Mayne, gazing at her daughter. "Are you jesting with me, Mary?"

"Why, to be sure I am. Who ever attaches importance to a dream?' concluded the girl, laughing, as she made her escape. But she shivered from head to foot as she went along the corridor; or gallery, as it was more often called. It had been the picture-gallery in the time of the late Mr. Mayne, and a few grand old pictures hung there still.

"No need to tell her of it until I am quite sure," sighed Mary; "and oh, there *may* be some mistake in it. Poor mamma!"

When Mr. Mayne and his son reached Goule Park, much dismay was expressed at the non-appearance of the two ladies, especially as they were the most interesting of the guests invited. The dinner was therefore even more dull than these entertainments generally were at Sir William's. The Underwoods were there, but Ernest was utterly downcast under his disappointment at not meeting Miss Dixon. Mr. and Mrs. Thornhill brought only one daughter, Matilda, the eldest. And a sly old gentleman remarked, in a tone which was purposely loud enough for Godfrey to hear, on the wonderful effect a certain lady's absence had upon his spirits. For at this dinner Godfrey Mayne looked quite like a forlorn lover, lost in himself, and speaking to hardly anybody.

When Lady Hunt retired with the ladies, who in this case could only be conventionally looked upon as enhancing the pleasures of the banquet by their grace and beauty, the gentlemen did indeed seem to feel that they were borne down by one burden the less, and the talk grew more animated. The bishop's last freak; the want of a Tory leader; the new organ which had just been presented to Croxham church; all were discussed, with other topics.

"Have you been into our church since the organ was placed there, Hunt?" asked Mr. Mayne.

The baronet shook his head. "I don't much care for music now," he said; "it tries me. But I'll come over some day soon to hear the new organ. Godfrey, here, will play it for me."

"With pleasure, sir," replied Godfrey, who was no mean musician, particularly on the organ.

"I remember," said the oldest gentleman of the party, who always had a remark with this opening to drag into any discussion, "I remember the time when the music in Croxham church was just a big fiddle and a little fiddle."

"I think the congregation used to join in the singing more heartily before the choir became of so much importance. The old men and women don't dare to join their voices to those of that pretentious row of smart lasses and lads near the organ now," said Mr. Thornhill, who was low church and mild.

"And a very good thing too," said the Reverend George Greville Masterton, who was high church and fierce, and Rector of Cheston.

"Such a bawling and squeaking as one may hear even yet in some out-of-the-way places where the congregation, such as it is, still has it all its own way with the singing. I call it a disgrace to divine service."

"I must say I like to hear good singing in church or anywhere else," said Mr. Mayne. "When I am in London, if the opera is open I always go to it. You used to be a great lover of music, Hunt. Do you still attend the opera much when you are in town—or concerts? I remember you and I heard Jenny Lind for the first time together."

"I have never been to any public entertainment since my boy William died," answered Sir William, gravely. "I do not go where I am likely to hear singing."

"But why, Hunt?" asked Mr. Thornhill.

"Well, you may judge how fond of singing I am now, when I tell you that the most beautiful voice I ever heard, not excepting Patti's or Jenny Lind's, was the voice of the woman who tricked and led my boy to his death."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Colonel Underwood, who was partly a stranger to the history. "How was that, Hunt?"

"It was in Rome," said Sir William; "about two years and a half ago, you know—rather more now. A mother and daughter were there—at least, I think they were mother and daughter, but I am not even yet acquainted with all the details. They ——"

"Were they gentlewomen?" interrupted the Colonel.

"Passing for such—adventuresses, most probably, under the rose. They lured my poor son on and on, with their cards and their wiles and their sweet singing. Such a magnificent voice it was! I had never, as it seemed to me, heard one to equal it—and I should know it to-morrow, were I to hear it again. They lured William on, I say, and—and murdered him in the end."

Godfrey, who had listened in silence, rose from table and staggered to the window. A most awful dread had crept in upon him. The air was suddenly hot as a furnace, the walls were falling upon him, his brain was bursting; his face was wet and ghastly as he stared out into the night.

Rome—two years and a half ago—most beautiful voice—their avoidance of Sir William!—what did it all mean?

The gentlemen at table looked round at him. What was amiss? It couldn't be the wine—he had not taken much of it. Oh, only the heated room!

"That young Mayne must be a milksop!" whispered the Rector of Cheston to the neighbour at his elbow.

As the large, closed carriage rolled homewards over the few miles between Goule Park and Croxham Abbey, Mr. Mayne took the opportunity to rally his son upon his newly developed delicacy.

"I think it is rather amusing, Godfrey, after your indignation at

Mrs. Mayne's illness. Was it the thunder that upset your nerves, also?"

"I don't wish to hear any more about it—or to talk of it, father," said Godfrey. "I was not ill; and my going to the window to get a breath of fresh air had nothing to do with either nerves or thunder. You speak as if I had made a scene. The room was simply too hot; and I have not yet sat through enough heavy dinners in stuffy old houses to be suffocated without minding it."

"Well, I don't know how you can call that big dining-room at Goule 'stuffy,'" returned his father, mildly. "It is twice as big as ours at the Abbey. When we have a dinner-party there you don't jump up suddenly as if you had been shot, and stagger to the window and put your head out, without answering for ever so long, when you are asked what is the matter. Old Masterton got quite nervous, and asked me if you were in the habit of fainting away. A pleasant thing for me, to be suspected of having a son who faints!"

"Very!" interjected Godfrey, satirically.

"Of course I was mortified; but I didn't know what to make of you myself. At first I feared you must surely have had too much wine, but I never knew you to take too much before, and I thought it was curious that you should begin at Sir William's. I saw Underwood grimace, absolutely grimace, when he tried the port; and as for the sherry—well, I believe Hunt gets it by advertisement, I do indeed. I know I shall have a bilious attack to-morrow."

"Well, well, father, let it be. I do not suppose I shall give rise to fears again that I am fainting."

And perhaps the assurance appeased Mr. Mayne. He put himself back in his corner, and fell comfortably asleep.

But there was no sleep, or chance of it, for Godfrey. His mind was simply distracted. One minute calling himself all sorts of wicked names for daring to attach any such suspicion, even for an instant, to Mary Dixon and her mother; the next, recounting over and over again all the points mentioned by Sir William. How could he *dare* to imagine such ill of her? Her beautiful face, with its sad brown eyes, as it had appeared to him when she reproached him for his suspicions—which were light compared with this!—rose up to shame him for his doubts. Doubts! Yes, thank heaven they were only doubts. He would speak to her to-morrow—would it were possible that he could speak to-night!—for, come what would of it, these dreadful doubts must be set at rest. Now he said to himself that he had no right whatever to have raised such doubts; but he saw that, looking back upon past events, they had raised themselves up naturally, as a result of those events.

In a degree they had been chased out of his mind by Mary's grace and charm, and also by common sense, but they came back now with a terribly new meaning suggested by Sir William's words. Was it remorse for having encouraged a mere lad to gamble with

cards which she was so anxious to forget? All Godfrey knew of young William Hunt's death was that it had occurred in Rome in —as he thought—a gambling quarrel, and that the people connected with it had escaped; that was all that anybody knew, for Sir William had an unconquerable repugnance to talk of it. He now recalled his step-mother's agitation at the mention of cards: was it possible—but no, he would not think it; that agitation might arise from some totally different cause.

Mary Dixon a gambling-house inmate!—a decoy! It was a sheer impossibility. Godfrey had heard of such women, of course, knew to what class they belonged, and of what type their attractions must be. And the distance, between such fascinations as theirs and those of the sweet girl whose manners had done even more to infatuate him than her innocent and lovely face, was immeasurable. Godfrey Mayne lived a quiet country life and seldom visited town; but when he was there the circle in which his relations lived, and to which he for the time belonged, was socially among the very best, and his taste in all that concerned women was fastidiously correct. He felt that Miss Dixon could no more have acquired the style which distinguished her from the dowdy ladies of the best, and the over-dressed ladies of the second-best society in the neighbourhood, among the riff-raff of Continental card-sharpers, than she could have cultivated her mind and trained her voice as she had done without the most careful instruction and supervision.

He bent down and held his head in his hands, trying in vain to fight his way, amid the mass of contradictions every fresh thought suggested, to some key to the mystery.

The only solution which occurred to him was one which woke in him a fresh torture, a mad impulse of jealousy. Mrs. Mayne had lived abroad since the death of her first husband, doubtless for the sake of training her daughter's voice; the latter had confessed, by a sudden start which he remembered, to having studied in Italy. Might they not have come in contact with needy adventurers who saw a source of almost boundless profit in the young girl's beauty and glorious voice? Two years and a half ago she was only nineteen: he knew her to be passionate, sensitive, impressionable, impulsive. Might not—the thought was fire—might not some good-looking, well-born roué, who deserved to be an outcast from that society whose manners he still retained, have insinuated himself into the friendship of both ladies, into the love of the younger, and—in some way—compromised them through his own bad manners? But, believe aught ill of themselves, he could not. There had been a time when Godfrey had had doubts about her, which some of his researches in Norfolk had seemed to justify; but they had died with the birth of his love. Pure she was, and must be. He would ask her without loss of time what the trouble was that weighed upon her, and he would be content with her answer, whatever it was (short of any fatal com-

promise), and trust to time and the reassurance it would bring to gain her full confidence, and would defend and comfort her. She might find the whole world hard and cruel, but not him. And—if the worst came to the worst; if he found that she could indeed be no fit wife for him, that the past raised up an insuperable barrier, why he would still do his best to protect, and shield her from the frowns of the world—as he would by some poor young relative of his own who might need it.

And Godfrey's heart glowed within him at the thought only of having this girl to love as a sister, and to ward off evil from always. He forgot Elspeth altogether; he forgot his dear old father, quietly dreaming by his side: just then the whole world contained but him and her.

The carriage rolled up to the door of the Abbey. William opened the door and let down the steps. Godfrey got out, and turned to help his father. Hawkins had the hall door open.

"There, go on, go on, Godfrey," said Mr. Mayne, sleepily: "I want to speak to Barth about the horses."

Mary came running down stairs and across the hall to welcome them, and almost ran against Godfrey, who was rushing in like a whirlwind. She had taken off her dinner-dress, and put on a simpler one of pale pink cashmere.

"I hope you have spent a pleasant evening," said she gaily, "and are come back ready to tell us all about it."

"Oh, very pleasant indeed!" answered Godfrey. "No," he added, in a different tone: "it was intensely dull."

"Dull! What was Lady Hunt about to allow it to be dull? Was she *very* much annoyed with poor mamma for not going? I hope not. It was foolish of her to be so fanciful; I told her so: but she is always alarmed at thunder."

"Is she?" mechanically returned Godfrey, deep in various items of thought.

Mr. Mayne was coming in at the moment. Mary passed Godfrey, and took his hand.

"Well, you naughty girl," said Mr. Mayne, not quite sure yet whether he was only sleepy, or just a little cross as well. "And so you can look quite cheerful and happy, when you have been the means of spoiling a whole evening's entertainment for a number of people."

"Oh, don't say that; it is very unkind to me; you don't mean it, I'm quite sure," said she, coaxingly. "You know I did my best to persuade her to go, and it was not my fault that I failed."

"But you ought to have come yourself. Lady Hunt said so."

"No doubt Miss Dixon had good reasons for not wishing to come," said Godfrey, carelessly, from the hat-stand. It was the last thing he ought to have said, if he intended to carry out his programme of storming Miss Dixon's confidence; but the coolness with which she

was asserting this, which he believed was not true, irritated him out of his prudence. The temptation to disturb her deceitful serenity was again strong upon him. But the serenity he disturbed was another person's.

Mr Mayne turned sharply on his son : it was the peculiar tone of voice that annoyed him. "What do you know about it, Godfrey? Mary's reasons for staying away were good—those of a dutiful daughter. I wish *you* could give as good reasons for your unaccountable conduct this evening."

Mary cast a lightning glance at Godfrey ; but Mr. Mayne was speaking again.

"Your mother, child : how is she now? Has she got over the thunder—of which we did not hear another sound?"

"Yes, quite," said Mary. "Come up, and see. She seems a little nervous yet, lest it should come back in the night. I won't say but she is sorry now that she did not go."

"I should think so," rejoined Mr. Mayne, as he followed the girl upstairs.

Mrs. Mayne was still in the dressing-room, seated on the sofa by the fire, which she had caused to be lighted : any sort of nervousness, especially that of a dreaded thunder-storm, made her feel chilly, she informed her maid, Lydia. She greeted her husband with an air of repentant humility which completed his subjection. He rallied her a little on being so sagacious a weather-prophet; and she replied, with a pretty air of yielding, that she was very very sorry. Mary sat down by her mother. It was scarcely yet the usual hour for retiring —eleven o'clock—for the party had broken up early. Mary asked Mr. Mayne to tell them all about the dinner and the dresses.

"Oh, you must ask Godfrey about the dresses ; I don't remember any of them, except that Mrs. Thornhill wore a brown gown with little black velvet bows. I remember that because I have always met her in that gown at dinner-parties for a long time now."

"How severe you are getting, sir," laughed Mary. "I didn't think you could say anything so cutting as that."

"Cutting—do you call it?" cried Mr. Mayne. "I didn't mean it to be so. I don't at all see why a lady should not wear a dress until it is worn out, if it is pretty. I don't think this one of Mrs. Thornhill's is pretty, though."

"The dresses of people who wear them till they are worn out never are pretty," said Mary, saucily.

"Nonsense ! Young ladies have no business with such extravagant notions. Matilda was in—in white muslin, I think."

"That was prettier than Mrs. Thornhill's brown silk."

"Well, perhaps so. When I say that Mrs. Thornhill's is not pretty, I only mean that—well, I felt as if I wanted to cut off some of the little bows. And I thought it would look better if it had one of those long flounce things behind, like the one you came down in, Mary."

The girl smiled mischievously. "A train, you mean. Well, yes, I should think it would."

"For my own part, I like something brighter than those dull browns and drabs. I like blue or pink," added Mr. Mayne.

"Did not Mrs. Locksley wear her pink?" asked Mrs. Mayne, with displayed interest.

"Let me see? Yes, I think she was in pink. But that is not quite the colour I mean. I like, well, I like the colour of this one that you have on, Mary."

"It is a pretty shade," said the girl, looking down approvingly. "But, indeed, sir, you would not call my dresses pretty if I wore them till they were as old as Mrs. Thornhill's."

"It seems to me that Mary spends more than half her income upon dress," remarked Mrs. Mayne. "Quite too much."

"Yes; you are an extravagant girl and a saucy one, Miss Mary," assented Mr. Mayne, playfully, "and you will never get a husband. Some handsome, dashing young fellow may think you look like a nice girl; but he will say to himself: 'She spends all her own money on dress, and that is how she would spend mine.'"

"'And the dear girl is welcome to do so,' he would add," returned the young lady, with renewed sauciness. "And then he would propose to me; and I should know that he cared, not for the little money I have, but for myself, and I should instantly say Yes, and marry him."

Mr. Mayne laughed. "I shall warn Ernest Underwood that he had better look out for someone more economical."

"My dear Henry!" protested his wife, with what looked like a touch of real anxiety.

"Well, I think it is an open secret now; at least among ourselves, Laura," replied the well-meaning, blundering man, good humouredly: not noticing that the girl herself had grown suddenly still and grave. "You should have seen how the young fellow's face fell, Miss Mary, when I and Godfrey appeared without you! Two disconsolate lovers were enough to damp anybody's spirits at a dinner-party, and with Ernest on one side of the table and Godfrey on the other, both looking as gloomy as if they were at a funeral ——"

"Godfrey!" interrupted Mrs. Mayne. "What did he look gloomy about?"

"About Elspeth, I suppose. Mr. and Mrs. Thornhill turned up with only Matilda; and—— Why, dear me! I wonder if that had anything to do with ——"

"With what?" questioned Mrs. Mayne.

"Well—only that Godfrey, who had better let his hair grow long, and call himself a poet at once, seems about to go in for being interesting. What do you think he did this evening by way of diversion? I admit we were a little dull after the ladies had left us. He sprang up from the table when we were all quietly talking, walked

zigzag fashion to the window, and leant against it as if he were going to faint! I thought he must be ill ——"

"Is he ill?"

"No. He said it was the heat. The heat! in September! And in that big, draughty dining-room of theirs!"

"Was anything said that vexed him?" asked Mary. "There must have been some reason for his looking so."

"Nothing at all was said of that sort," dissented Mr. Mayne, rubbing up his memory. "We had been talking of—of church music; yes, that was it: the singing of our choir. That couldn't make him feel faint—out of church, at any rate. And then Sir William spoke of his son's death, mentioning some particulars that none of us had heard before: but there was nothing in all that to affect Godfrey. He—why, Laura! you are looking faint yourself, now!"

"I am only a little tired," murmured Mrs. Mayne.

"The fact is, mamma ought not to have sat up so long this evening," said Mary, calmly, as she rose: "a storm, or only the threatening of a storm, fatigues her. Mamma, I think you should go to bed. I shall ring for Lydia."

"Well, I never had so many frights and disappointments and surprises in one evening before," cried Mr. Mayne. "First your mother is ill; then Godfrey tries to faint; and I declare you yourself look whiter than either of them. Is there something the matter with all of you—or what is it?" he asked, with a sudden change of tone.

"There is something the matter with me, I know," laughed Mary, who was quite equal to coping with her unsuspicious step-father. "I think if I don't find myself in bed very shortly, I shall drop off to sleep as I stand, and sleep for a hundred years, like the princess in the fairy-tale."

"I don't feel inclined for bed yet," said Mr. Mayne; "I'm not sleepy. I'll go downstairs and have it out with Godfrey about that fainting matter—that is, if he is about yet. Good-night, Mary."

"No, mamma, I will not have you talk to-night," said Mary, as her mother was beginning with an eager whisper the moment the door closed. "There is nothing to alarm you; I am sure of that. You must get a good night, and be fresh and well in the morning."

"But, Mary," remonstrated the unhappy lady, striving to still her trembling hands, "you heard what was said about Godfrey and his agitation: his suspicions must have been further directed to us; to you and to me. *Something* must be done—to allay them."

In low, eager tones the mother talked until the maid entered. Then, with a warm, comforting kiss, and a last soft promise that all should be right, Mary took up a small lighted lamp, and withdrew. The day's work and the day's strain had sadly tired her, and she was full of secret anxiety beyond what her mother knew of. Leaving the lamp on a slab near her own door, she walked on softly down the wide, handsome corridor, intending to open the end

window and stand at it, that the fresh air might cool her throbbing temples.

But the window was already open. The bright moonlight streamed in, lighting up the green-carpeted floor and a few of the paintings that hung here and there upon the walls. And not until Mary was quite close to the window did she perceive that someone was leaning against the frame. It was Godfrey.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE MOONLIT GALLERY.

GODFREY was himself in a mental tumult. Godfrey had throbbing temples also. And Godfrey had gone to the gallery window for the fresh air and the indulgence of thought just as Mary had been going.

He wanted to have his doubts set at rest. Set at rest in some way. His sober reason refused to believe that she, that delicate girl, could have been mixed up in the affair of young William Hunt's death; he felt sure that, if it were so, it must have been innocently and unwittingly. But he must know.

He did not know what he should say to her; all he knew was that he must speak to her as soon as might be, that the force of his passionate entreaties must prevail with her to trust him. He would not tell her he loved her; he could not while he was engaged to Elspeth, he had sense enough to remember that: and, in good truth, he should never tell her, unless his doubts were solved. If she guessed it, why he could not help that; but he would use all the inducements a brother might use, with a thousand times a brother's fervour; and surely she, so sensitive, passionate, impulsive under all the cold armour of reserve she could put on when she chose, would recognise the true ring in his sympathy and let her heart go out to meet it, and trust him fully with the past. Why, if he could meet her in the corridor, even then, on her way to her chamber, he would speak without further delay.

A great deal of this was simple folly. But it was born of a resolution so earnest, so devoted, that it might carry its object by force. To waylay a young lady at night in a moonlit corridor, and force her by the mere power of passionate persuasion to confess to him a secret which she had closely guarded from everyone until that moment, would have seemed, even to Godfrey, a wildly impossible enterprise viewed by the light of reason, or even thought over in broad daylight. But his love, his doubts, Sir William's words, and perhaps the heat of the little wine he had taken, were all casting their glamour over him, and robbing him in a degree of his sober calmness. All he felt was that her secret, whatever it might be, he must share with

her; she was unhappy, and he must comfort her. On the face of it, this was a delicate task for an engaged man: but for all the cynicism he professed, for all the passion he now began to feel, Godfrey was as pure-hearted as a child, and he trusted quite simply to his own single-minded intentions. And then some day, some day—if that past could be entirely cleared—ah, what a glorious future was possible! When he should be free, somehow, and she should know that he loved her with all his heart and soul.

And so he stood and thought and dreamt, and the glamour upon him grew brighter; until he heard her—her—coming down the long corridor, and fell to trembling when she was so close as almost to touch him.

And she? After the first moment of surprise and fright, for she did not immediately recognise the intruder, her indignation rose against this man. For a thought flashed into her mind that he must have come there to lie in wait for her; to take her, all unprepared, weary, sick with anxiety as she was, to accuse her, to question her, to frighten her—all the outcome of what he had heard at the dinner-table. Her spirit rose at the very thought of the insolence.

"Good night," she said, turning abruptly, to retreat.

"One moment, please, Miss Dixon," said he, with that thrill in his voice which makes man or woman pause and listen. He had moved a little now, and stood upright, and he gently touched her dress to arrest her. "I want to say a few words to you."

"I am very tired now. Won't to-morrow do, Mr. Godfrey?"

'No, no; there is something—just a word—I must say to-night. I see you are tired; I won't keep you; but I was very rude this evening, just before we started for Goule Park, and I am glad not to wait until the morning to tell you how much ashamed I feel, and how very, very sorry I am to have caused you any distress—for you looked distressed. You will not refuse to forgive me, I hope."

"Of course I will not refuse. Indeed, I had forgotten all about it. I took it for granted that you must have been vexed about some other matter, so that a little thing irritated you."

She spoke coldly and carelessly. He appeared to be in the kind, gentle mood she had begun to think the most dangerous in him, and to-night there was something in his tone she had not heard before, something which told her there was a meaning, a purpose in all this. He was going to be her enemy, she supposed: well, she must avoid him now, and cope with him another time. But he had decided that it should be now.

"Was it such a very little thing, Miss Dixon?" he asked.

"We will discuss that some other time," said she, wearily. "I do not feel equal to a late argument to-night in the passage."

"Were you not coming here to get a breath of air, this close night?"

"Yes, I was," she answered, truthfully; "for my head aches."

"Stand here and take it, then. And won't you please answer me while you do so?"

She hesitated. Her sense of fatigue was vanishing before a momentarily increasing anxiety to know what it was he had found out or suspected; and she turned in acquiescence.

They stood together at the window, looking out on the fair night scene, Godfrey with his arms folded, his head drawn up, the moonlight playing upon his fair, bright hair. Mary in her pale pink frock looked little more than a girl: a small gold locket was suspended from her neck by a thin chain, and bore her initials, M. D., in diamonds that flashed in the moonlight. She stood with her pale face bent.

"Was it a very small thing which kept you away from Goule Park this evening?" reiterated Godfrey.

"A very small thing, I am afraid, to be the cause of offending so many people, and of bringing this most undeserved penance upon the head of a poor girl who had nothing to do with it," answered she.

"Nothing to do with it?"

"Why, no. How could I have? Surely you don't think of making me responsible for mamma's fancies about the thunderstorm?"

"But I do not understand why the fancies should have come. There was really no appearance of thunder."

"Do you think not?"

"Miss Dixon," said he, playing a bold stroke, "why did you avoid going to Goule Park this evening?"

"Avoid going! You are talking at random," she retorted. "What reason could I have had for not wishing to go there?"

"I—don't—know. I want to know. I would give my right hand to know."

He was clearly in earnest; in such terrible earnest that it was difficult to stand there beside him and face the searching gaze of his eyes, fixed keenly upon her.

"Then I think you had better ask someone more able to inform you than I am."

She made another movement to turn; but Godfrey spoke again.

"Are you wise in treating me like this, Miss Dixon?"

Her face, as it confronted his, looked rigid as stone. "What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean that your secret, the secret you confess to holding and to hiding, is connected with someone you would have met at Goule this evening. Unless I am greatly mistaken."

"Indeed! This is quite the most curious accusation I ever heard. But let us suppose, for a moment, it were true. You have not the least idea what my secret is ——"

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. Nor does a secret necessarily imply a crime," she

boldly added, sick of the fencing. "And even if it did, are you a detective officer?"

"No. But ——"

"Stay, Mr. Godfrey. Do you not know ——"

She seemed to stop for breath: it was growing short. The moonbeams, broken slightly by the branches of a tree outside, fell on her face. How sweet and sad it looked!

"Do you not know that all women, young or old, may have little secrets, innocent enough generally, which are as sacred to them as the laws of their religion? Can you tell me what reason I could have for making you, against my own will, the high priest of my confidences? My mother has married your father. Does that give you a right to the key of my heart and conscience?"

"I pray you ——"

"I pray you, hear me. Mr. Mayne has never asked for a journal of my inmost thoughts, never even taken the common precaution of sending some astute person about the country to find out whether I am not masquerading under false colours. But you have. Not content with suspecting, watching, tracking, you are beginning to persecute me and to make my very life a burden to me."

She put her hand upon the window-sill, her slight frame shaking. Godfrey did not speak.

"Yes. Now begin your cross-examination, for I must submit to it, I see. It would be absurd for me to try to stop you by calling your conduct mean and cowardly: on a man, who can behave as you are doing, such words can have no effect."

At that moment Godfrey thought he heard a sound behind them; he turned his ear sharply to listen. She, not understanding his silence, tapped her fingers upon the window-sill impatiently.

"Well, are you not going on?" cried she, in a reckless tone. "No criminal has to stand at the Bar all night."

"You are partly making sport of this, Miss Dixon. To me it is anything but sport. I feel half ashamed to question you; and to explain to you what it is that has given rise to—to——Sir William Hunt was telling us a tale this evening," he rapidly went on; "and it took, I hardly know why, a strangely-curious hold upon me."

All her bravado vanished at once. "What tale was it?"

"One which contained an implication so terrible that I—dare not repeat it."

"On me?"

"Heaven help me! I—don't—know."

"Of what kind?"

He answered without daring to look at her. "Treachery. Connivance at—at a crime."

"What crime?"

"I *cannot* tell you," he burst forth with emotion. "I feel as if I were going mad?"

"I think you are; but never mind that at present. I should really like to know what crime it is I have connived at, or been supposed to connive at. Is it theft?" A pause. "Forgery?" A pause. "Murder?"

Godfrey shuddered. He could feel by the tremulous motion of her dress that she was shaking from head to foot. But when she spoke, her voice was low and still.

"So that was the crime Sir William regaled his company with! Murder!—and a very terrible crime too. Pray whose?"

"His son's; young William."

"Oh, his son's! Where did I do it?"

Godfrey seized her cold hand in his, and looked at her with a face as white as her own. "If you have any mercy, do not treat it in that way! Every mocking word you speak cuts me like a knife."

"I am sorry I cannot speak on this subject more pleasantly. I ——"

At last she was giving way under the strain, staggered, and partly fell against him. He put his arm round her, and for one brief instant her cheek rested nervelessly on his shoulder. The next moment she was standing up again and had put his arm away.

"I am not ill, thank you; I am too hardened for that. At least I ought to be, if what you would accuse me of is true ——"

"Mary, for Heaven's sake, stop! Do you think I am flint? Do you care? Don't you see you are torturing me like ——"

"Am I? And I meant to be so nice about it! I beg your pardon for seeming so ungrateful. I really don't know how to apologise for having had the bad taste to be annoyed ——"

"Silence," he interrupted, sternly. "Do you suppose I for a moment thought you really guilty? Why, if I had, could I have *spoken* to you about it? Trusting in you as I do ——"

"Yes: you have shown that trust before, very touchingly."

"Look here: there can be no doubt that your mother showed singular emotion when she heard the name of Sir William Hunt, and that his place was in this neighbourhood; she remained at home this evening on an absurdly slight pretext, and insisted on your remaining with her—for which there was no shadow of excuse. It set me thinking: and when Sir William spoke of—of—the death of his son, and that two ladies were in some way involved in it, mother and daughter, one of them young and beautiful—well, I suppose I must have thought of your mother and you, and I suppose I must have gone a little out of my mind to do so. There's the whole truth, and I can only beg of you to forgive me."

"What else did Sir William say of the one that was young and beautiful?"

"Nothing," carelessly replied Godfrey: for, strange to say, the remark that had made more impression on him than aught else—the magnificent voice Sir William had heard—he repressed.

"With my will, or against my will, I kept fitting things together in my mind," he returned, "until I was tortured just to death. Then I said to myself, I am very foolish, I know, but I will tell it all to Mary Dixon, and that will ease me. What else could I have done?"

"What else?" retorted she, passionately: "Call in a policeman and give me into custody. Say to him that you have heard of a murder committed by a good-looking girl in Rome—it was Rome, I think you said?—and that you consider me good-looking; that you are sure I have been to Rome, and that you will fit the crime to the girl or the girl to the crime in no time. Don't interrupt me. Believe me, I understand your feelings perfectly. Why, I had fancied I might be doing something rather rash in staying here tête-à-tête with you when it's going on for midnight; but now it is your courage in facing me, with no arms of defence about you, that I cannot sufficiently admire. Why do you encounter so frightful a risk? How do you know but I may have a dagger concealed in my pocket?"

He could not tell whether she was cold, or at a white heat of excitement: she was trembling. Her fair features were white and rigid as marble; in her rich brown eyes, gazing at him through their long dark lashes, there lay an angry yet most pitiful light.

"You are doing me cruel injustice, Miss Dixon," he said at last, very quietly. "I cannot force your confidence, I cannot make you believe I deserve it. I am sorry to have forced upon you this painful interview; it was a mad thing to do, and I don't know how to undo it. I will not detain you any longer. Perhaps later I may think of some form of apology to you; I cannot now." Godfrey passed his hand over his forehead, as if unable to collect his thoughts. Then he said, still in the same subdued voice, "My presence, after this scene to-night, could not fail to be distasteful to you; but you have nothing to fear from that; I shall quit the Abbey."

It was a sudden resolution; taken on the spur of the moment: but he felt that to remain at home would be unbearable after this. Again there came the sound that he thought he had before heard, and he turned his head. Mary stood in thought.

"Mr. Godfrey, it is my turn to beg now. I know—I feel that when you leave me I shall be ashamed and sorry for all the hard and harsh things I have just now spoken. I have been very rude, I am afraid; I hardly know what I said—I was so miserable, so much hurt—" Her voice trembled, and she paused. "But I know I must have been unpardonably harsh for you to speak of my chasing you from your home.—What is it that you are looking at?" she broke off to question; for Godfrey still had his head turned.

"I fancied I heard a faint noise, as of someone being there."

She turned her face—startled. "In the gallery—behind us?"

"No, in the old school-room. I dare say I was mistaken."

"And you will not let me chase you away from the Abbey?" she said, as they turned to the open window again.

"It is not that: not anything you have said: you did well to be indignant. But you will forgive me if I go away. At the end of two or three months, when I come back, you will have forgotten it, perhaps."

"Do you think one forgets such an accusation as that?" She spoke so gently, so sadly now, with no passion, no hardness. "I can never forget it; I think you will understand that when you recall what a dreadful charge it is that you would bring against me."

"No, no, I brought no charge. I will tell you what I thought; I know how devoted you can be, by your fondness for your mother: I thought it was just possible that someone in whom you and your mother were interested, some relative, or—or a lover——"

"I have never loved anyone," she quietly interrupted: and in her face there shone a look of noble steadfastness that made Godfrey's heart leap. "Never. Do you believe me?"

"I *do* believe you," he said. "Now will you answer one question: why do you avoid Sir William Hunt?"

There was an instant's pause. "I do not avoid Sir William Hunt."

"Surely you cannot say that?"

"I do say it."

Godfrey leant against the window-frame, wholly taken by surprise, sick with disgust and bitter disappointment. Through all his doubts, he had not expected a bold, deliberate falsehood from her.

"After that, of course I have no more to say, Miss Dixon."

"But I have," she answered. "You have asked for a confession, for my confidence; you shall have them both. Then you will see why I have kept them back for so long. There is a secret that concerns Sir William Hunt; but it is not mine. It is my mother's."

"Mrs. Mayne's!" exclaimed Godfrey.

"Yes. And I cannot compliment you on your penetration in not having discovered as far as that for yourself. Who was it that turned faint at the first mention of Sir William's name? Who was it that wanted to refuse the invitation to Goule Park altogether?—for I know that did not escape you. Who was it that was taken with nervousness to-night in time to avoid going to the dinner?"

Godfrey could not help wondering, as she put these questions slowly and forcibly, why this view of the matter had never struck him before. But Mrs. Mayne had seemed so very impossible a person to have a secret of her own—at least one of any importance.

"Try to think over all the times when Sir William or Goule Park has been mentioned, and to remember who it was that showed the most emotion," she continued.

"Mrs. Mayne, certainly. But she shows her feelings more readily than you do."

"She had more reason in this case. You shall judge for yourself.

A long time ago she knew Sir William, and a matter arose between them in which she treated him, as he thought, very ill. I know the circumstances, and I do think he had reason to feel aggrieved and hurt; though not to the extent he did, or to vow he would sometime be revenged upon her. But they say he is a man who treasures up his wrongs, and even now she is afraid to meet him, whether rightly or not, I cannot say. It is possible that he might attempt to make mischief between her and Mr. Mayne. She never cared a straw for Sir William; while the other man, for whom she—she—threw him over, she would have given her life for."

"Is this true?" asked Godfrey, impulsively.

"Every word of it is true."

Godfrey bent his head in an agony of relief and thankfulness. When he looked up, he met the gaze of her speaking eyes fastened upon him with an eager intentness that startled him. It meant something he could not understand. As he met her look her eyes fell.

"You will not suspect me again?"

"I will not. I will keep your confidence, and your mother's secret, with my life," said he, fervently.

"You must keep it. And you can do so with a clear conscience; for she, poor kindly mother, has never done aught worse than tell a few harmless stories and practise a few simple manœuvres—which were always found out—in all her life."

This was exactly the character Godfrey would himself have given his step mother. In his relief he laughed.

"Thank Heaven the secret was not yours!" he breathed in a low voice. "You—you can understand perhaps how glad I am?"

"Yes, of course," said she, quietly. "And now I will wish you good-night, Mr. Godfrey."

He clasped nervously the hand she held out to him, and turned to walk up the gallery with her. "You will forgive me my doubts, suspicions, questions, everything? If not, I ——"

"I forgive everything on one condition," she interrupted: "that you will not think of quitting the Abbey until I shall have left it."

"But you will not leave it. Surely you will not. You have just said you would forgive me."

He spoke with more fervour than the occasion required, and Miss Dixon withdrew her hand.

"I am not going on your account, I assure you, Mr. Godfrey. For some little time past I have been thinking that I ought to go. However, we will leave that at present."

They were nearing the slab where she had placed the little lamp, which did not give much light. The first door was that of the old school-room; beyond it that of Mary's bed-room. On the opposite side a door opened into a guest-chamber, which was not occupied. Godfrey suddenly stopped, looked at her, and bent his head, in the act of listening. Putting his finger on his lips to enjoin silence, he laid

his hand softly upon the door-handle of the school-room: a sound, as of a suppressed cough was heard within it. For an instant she looked convulsed with terror; then, with astonishing want of presence of mind, called out aloud:

"What is it? Someone is in there!"

"The lamp—quick!" cried he.

But in her fright she let it fall just as he was snatching it from her; or it may be they let it fall between them. There was enough moonlight to enable him to see a match-box standing on the slab. He seized it and dashed open the room door. The blinds were not drawn down; he was able to satisfy himself without any artificial light that no one was in the room, and he concluded the sounds must have come from the corridor. He looked down it, but could see no one. Miss Dixon was examining her little lamp.

"The matches, please; I want to light this," said she, holding it up to see whether it was injured by the fall. Her teeth were chattering with fear; she tried to suppress it. "Could anybody get into the house?" she whispered.

"No, no; of course not. It must have been one of the servants. I believe it was Lydia."

"Lydia is with mamma."

"It was one of them, I know; eavesdropping," persisted Godfrey.

"Well, yes, I think it was. Perhaps it was Hawkins?"

Godfrey believed that, if so, the faithful Hawkins must have been visiting the decanters, and mistaken his way to bed. Of which he would hear more from Godfrey in the morning.

Mary Dixon shook hands with Godfrey, and shut herself into her room. He went back with slow steps to close the gallery window, and stood there thinking.

He was in a tumult of feeling. Elspeth was utterly forgotten. What thought could he give to *her*, that simple little maiden, amid the storm of fierce emotions which this pale girl with the changeful dark and lovely eyes had awoke in him this night? He had hated her, admired her, feared her, worshipped her, mistrusted her by turns, to find himself, now that he was left alone, ten times more surely the slave of her influence than if she had hung about him with soft words and caresses, and an answering love-light in her passionate eyes.

Passionate: but yet, how cold she was! For this delicate girl had a strange dignity, and could hold her own against the world. She owned that she had never felt love; that did not mean that she never could feel it. No man thinks a cold woman can be cold to him, if only he should deem it worth his while to induce her to be the contrary. There was a certain coldness about Mary Dixon which Godfrey did not at present intend to seek to subdue; but wild possibilities of hope, fear, longing, despair chased each other about in his excited brain.

Closing the window, he began slowly to pace the corridor back, on

his way to his own room : when, as he was passing Mary Dixon's, sounds again smote his ear. Sounds of distress this time : wild sobs, moans of anguish, if not of terror.

When Mary entered her room, all the impassive calmness she had been endeavouring to keep up was thrown to the winds. She glanced nervously about her, as if fearing to see an enemy ; then, sinking down on the ground like one in the depth of despair, throwing her hands upon a chair and her head upon them, she gave way to the most bitter distress. Convulsive sobs shook her frame, and they became loud and louder, almost beyond control.

She was disturbed by a hurried knocking at the door. She started up, dried her eyes as well as she could, and opened the door a little way. "Is it you, Lydia? Does mamma want me?"

"It is I—Godfrey."

Her tear-stained cheeks, which there was just light enough to see, moved him as her most radiant smiles had never done ; he almost lost command over his words. He thought it was he who had caused the distress.

"Forgive me ! I heard you crying. It is my fault, I know—some of the hateful things I said. If I did but know how to comfort you ! I care for you more than for anyone on earth. I love you—I grieve for you—my heart is torn with ——"

"Sir !" interrupted Miss Dixon, with the air of an empress. "How dare you address such words to me?" she added, her voice alive with passion. "How dare you come knocking at my door at this hour? Love ! Are you mad?"

Godfrey drew himself up to his full height. "I beg your pardon if I have offended you," he said in a cold, proud tone. "But you mistake me. Did you ever have a sister, Miss Dixon? I believe not. Well, I have one : my dear little sister Isabel. This was her room ; and sometimes I have heard sobs of distress from her in her girlish troubles just as I now heard them from you ; and I have come to the door here to comfort her—to see what I could do for her. I had no other thought now. And for that I humbly crave your pardon. I am not quite mad. Good-night."

He went quickly along the gallery towards his own room. Mary Dixon gazed after him until he was out of view, a strangely softened expression on her face and a piteous look in her tear-dimmed eyes, as if it was hard to be so cruel to this well-meaning young man, who wanted to be so kind to her.

"I cannot help myself; I cannot help myself!" she murmured, plaintively, a fresh flood of tears streaming forth. "Oh, merciful God, Thou knowest all my miserable plight ; all my helplessness !"

CHAPTER XV.

LOCKED IN THE VESTRY.

GODFREY MAYNE woke next morning to quite the most miserable and uncomfortable state of mind he had ever been in. He had not slept until morning light. An impression lay upon him that he had made a fool of himself in more ways than one the previous evening. He wished Miss Dixon at the bottom of the sea.

It was late when he got downstairs. Mr. Mayne was leaving the breakfast-room; Mary Dixon had left the table and was standing at the window, both of them having finished their meal.

Godfrey said Good-morning, and advanced to the breakfast-table. In spite of the sore feeling underlying his mind against Miss Dixon, he thought she might as well come back and offer to pour out his coffee. She did nothing of the kind. So Godfrey, rather cross and snappish, seized the coffee-pot to pour it out for himself; in doing which he caught the handle of the urn with his cuff and turned some boiling water over on his hand.

"Hang it!" he exclaimed under his breath, as he stamped and shook his fingers. And just then he caught sight of Miss Dixon, who stood watching him with a suspiciously demure expression of face. What business had she to stand there laughing at him instead of coming forward to his assistance? But she did come.

"May I do that?" she asked, gravely; and poured out his coffee. In the meantime he had been foraging about the table and found nothing to his liking, hammered away at two eggs with the comment "Brickbats!" smashed down the cover on the kidneys with the word "Cold," and at last went to the side-board and began cutting away at the cold beef with an appearance of much labour.

"Had you not better use the edge of the knife?" suggested Mary, and burst into a fit of open laughter.

"Oh, ah, yes," said he, trying to laugh also, as he saw that he was cutting with the back of the knife, but much vexed with himself, and still more so with her. However, she tried to make amends for the offence by ringing for more eggs, handing him a fork, and being over-solicitous about the sweetness of his coffee. Godfrey began to feel soothed; and to come round a little.

"You must think me very ill-tempered."

"Oh no, not at all," she answered, with apparent astonishment at the suggestion.

He was conquered, and began to laugh. "I am so," he said. "The truth is, I have had a very bad night. I couldn't get to sleep, and—and that has put me out of temper, I suppose."

"Ah, yes, it often does. I mean," she corrected, "it is the sort of thing that makes one feel rather—rather irritable next day."

"Yes. There was a wicked gnat buzzing about my room, for one thing," said he, uncomfortably.

"Gnats are very troublesome."

Then came a pause. Godfrey, who had no appetite, was laying down his knife and fork. "Is Mrs. Mayne not down yet?" he asked.

"Not yet. Mamma has had some breakfast taken up to her."

Another pause. Godfrey wanted to come easily and neatly to the subject of that unlucky intrusion of his, and to put the matter right, once and for ever. He supposed she might still be thinking hard things of him for it, perhaps to the extent of believing him to be no gentleman. So he wished to come to an explanation; a thing which men, in their right mind, usually avoid: especially, perhaps, if they know they are not in the wrong. At all events the conversation must be kept up somehow. He went back to the gnat. But he did not find that help him much.

Presently she got up and walked to the window. Godfrey followed. "I wanted to tell you how sorry I am for—for last night," he said. "You must have thought me very—very unconventional, and—and I haven't the least idea what I said; but, if it was anything rude or—or foolish, I hope you will forget it. One says very foolish things sometimes."

"One does often."

"Very foolish. At least not exactly foolish, perhaps, but——"

"But untrue. Don't trouble yourself any more about the matter, Mr. Godfrey. There were gnats in my room, too, and—and let them bear the blame of everything."

"Oh, yes, exactly; of everything. Only—I can't bear to think you are unhappy here; or that anything I may have said—ever—should have made you cry."

"Oh, it was not you at all," said she, quickly. "I assure you it had nothing to do with you, nothing whatever."

And into these words Miss Dixon managed clearly to insinuate the meaning:—"Nothing you could do or say could ever fail to be a matter of indifference to me?" There the conversation ended, and Godfrey left her without quite knowing what feeling was uppermost in his mind; but it was certainly not brotherly. By-and-by he began to take himself to task; to realise how wrongly he had been acting in allowing himself to be carried so far away from his allegiance to Elspeth. He would go across to the Vicarage this morning, and atone by new devotion for his secret infidelity.

Passing through the gate to cross the meadow, he saw Mary walking in the garden. Instinctively he hesitated for a moment and then went straight on to the meadow, with a feeling that he was doing something heroic in avoiding her. As he turned to shut the gate he saw Ernest Underwood come up to the house, and instantly regretted his own heroism. He turned round again and saw that they had met,

and were talking gravely and earnestly. And the lull in his emotions was over. What did Ernest, who was supposed to be studying hard for some examination or other, want to be always dangling about the Abbey for? What business had a mere lad like that to be thinking of getting married—if that was the meaning of his visits? And what on earth did Miss Dixon mean by encouraging the boy? She had told him last night that she had never loved: surely she could not give her affection now to a foolish, hair-brained young fellow not as old as herself? Godfrey was so much irritated by the silly and unreasonable conduct of these young people that when he got to the Vicarage field and saw that none of the Thornhills were about he turned back again. Meeting one of the Vicarage servants, he heard that the Vicar's family had gone out for the day. All in a moment, as he was sauntering along, a question darted into his mind—why did Mary Dixon object to his leaving home; and exact a promise from him that he would not leave? What could it be to her, whether he went away or stayed? Could it be that she was afraid he might employ himself in more investigations concerning her past life, and not in Norfolk this time, but in Rome? The next moment he hated himself for the thought.

He had sauntered towards the farm, and saw Mr. Wilding standing at his gate, apparently waiting for someone. As Godfrey accosted him, a gentleman, rather loosely attired, came out of the house and joined him. "Sorry to keep you waiting, sir," said the stranger, "but I had to finish a letter. I——" at that moment his eyes fell upon Godfrey, and he stopped short in what he was about to say, and looked at him keenly. Nothing more was said, however, and he walked away with the farmer at a brisk pace. He looked about five-and-thirty, was of middle height, or nearly so, and broad about the shoulders; with a dark, olive skin, a mass of thick grey hair, and long, full grey whiskers. The tones of his voice sounded singularly soft and persuasive; almost more so than in a man is pleasant to the ear. It was not quite pleasant to Godfrey's.

"That is your lodger?" he remarked to Nancy, who came forth to him from the door, drying a tea-pot with a cloth.

"Yes, sir, that's Mr. Cattermole," she answered. "He is going into Cheston with my father before dinner."

"I've seen him sitting about the fields, I think, taking his sketches. Is he much of an artist?"

"He seems to be fonder of smoking and lounging about than of anything else: as you used to be, Master Godfrey," added she, with a twinkle of her black eye. "He brings home a sketch now and then, and I think he has talent if he'd only be industrious and exercise it. He might be good at portraits, I fancy."

"Why do you fancy that?"

"Well, it was rather an odd thing," began Nancy. "This morning—but I dare say you would not care to hear it, Master Godfrey."

"Yes, I should," said Godfrey; who, too proud to disturb Miss Dixon and Ernest Underwood, had nothing to do with his time just then. "Tell it me."

The tale that Nancy told was this: That morning her mother sent her into the best parlour, to ask for the *Cheston Chronicle*, which had been lent to their lodger the previous day. He was sitting at the table painting a face, apparently sketched off then quickly and roughly. So Nancy thought, as she, not being troubled with any superfluous reticence, looked over his shoulder in passing.

"What a good likeness!" she exclaimed.

"To you?" lightly replied Mr. Cattermole.

"To me, no. To Miss Dixon."

"Who is Miss Dixon?"

"The young lady at the Abbey."

"Oh, ah! I remember now. I've seen her at a distance: a quiet-looking, pale girl."

"You must have seen her near also," retorted Nancy, laughing, "to take that sketch of her—and to catch the bright shade on her dark hair, and the pretty colour of her brown eyes."

"You are very clever, Miss Nancy; but I give you my word of honour this is not meant for any Miss Dixon," returned the artist. "It is the likeness of a young lady I met abroad and afterwards lost sight of. I have done it from memory."

"It *is* like Miss Dixon, anyway, and wonderfully like," concluded Nancy, as she turned away to look for the newspaper amidst Mr. Cattermole's untidy pile of journals scattered on the side tables.

After finding it, which took a few minutes, she was leaving the room, when he, who had been working quickly, spoke. "Is it like her now?"

"Oh!" screamed out Nancy; as she looked at the sketch again. "What a shame!"

He had made the hair and eyebrows red, put lines to the forehead and wrinkles to the mouth; it was a middle-aged face now, and not at all like Miss Dixon's.

"What a shame!" repeated Nancy: and the artist laughed in merriment.

This little occurrence she now repeated to Godfrey: adding that she believed he must have caught Miss Dixon's likeness surreptitiously, but did not like to confess it.

"Like his impudence!" ejaculated Godfrey, drawing himself up.

Wishing Nancy good morning, and supposing young Underwood must have gone by this time, he passed through the plantation to the garden. There he saw Miss Dixon and Ernest with their backs towards him, walking very slowly and talking more earnestly than ever. He approached them across the grass; and, quite unintentionally, heard something that Mary was saying.

"That may be. But he is mean enough to have played the spy. I cannot and will not trust him."

"Oh, no; Godfrey is a good fellow——" Ernest was beginning in answer, when the subject of their talk appeared by their side.

"What is that about Godfrey?" he asked, with perfect ingenuousness; not as if he had heard anything.

"Oh, nothing that is not complimentary, you may be sure," laughed Ernest. "We were just saying that you were the most active, energetic, amiable ——"

"Good-tempered," suggested Miss Dixon.

"Yes; and good-tempered young man, within the region of our acquaintance."

"Thank you, my kind friends," said Godfrey, drily. His appearance having disturbed the interest of the talk, Ernest took his leave. Mary was turning to the house when Godfrey stopped her.

"Don't go in directly, please, Miss Dixon. I want to say something to you."

He spoke carelessly, but he saw the colour rise to her face and then leave it white and wan.

"It is nothing of any consequence," he added, more carelessly still. "You know last night, when we had all that long and tedious explanation in the gallery, exposed to every sort of danger from ghosts and robbers, not to speak of Hawkins——by the way, though," he broke off, "I have had Mr. Hawkins before me this morning, and he strenuously denies, in a most injured tone, having been in any passages but his own; so perhaps it was only my fancy, after all."

He said this to reassure her fears—if she had any on the score. But he could see that she was in a fever of anxiety for him to go on with what he had begun.

"Well, when it was over and we had come to the formal reconciliation, do you remember that, to seal the bond, you made me promise not to leave the Abbey?"

"Yes."

"I want you to let me retract that promise, for I am simply dying to be off and doing something. I cannot any longer bear this idle life. I think of going to London, to a relative of ours, of whom you have heard us speak—Abbotsford. He is in the government, and may be able to get me some post that will at least occupy my time and thoughts. I don't care for pay."

"But I can't let you retract it, Mr. Godfrey. It was part of our agreement, our act of reconciliation. *Indeed* I wish you to stay."

"That I may be the target for you and Ernest Underwood to lance your arrows at?"

"No, no, *no*," she repeated, warmly. "I want you to stay for my—for my sake. Sometimes a vague dread lies upon me, of some unknown danger, and I have no protector. You spoke last night of your sister Isabel: will you let me be as your sister, in case of need?"

Godfrey would not have left the Abbey after that. He took her

hand. "As my true sister," he said: "I ask nothing better." For the present, he added mentally.

"Thank you," she softly whispered: and he saw the tears rush to her eyes.

"Talking of promises," resumed Godfrey, "do you remember one you made to me?"

"No. What was it?"

"That you would sing to me again."

Mary looked out before her very gravely, and did not answer immediately. "I would do so willingly," she presently said, "but I hardly see how I can. Mamma has an insuperable dislike to my singing; she thinks it tries me too much; and I do not care to go against her will: she would be so very angry if she heard me."

Godfrey was silent. Of course he could not urge her to anger her mother by singing in her hearing; and Mrs. Mayne seemed not to be going out much just now. A happy thought came to him.

"You sing sacred music. Why not come into the church and sing to the organ?"

"Well—I hardly know. I should like to fulfil my promise, as you have been good to me. But I should not wish for anyone else to hear me sing; and perhaps someone or other might be coming in."

"Not the least danger of it," cried Godfrey, eagerly. "Nobody goes in, that I know of, but the Thornhills—and myself once in a way. The Thornhills are away to day; so that you might come this afternoon with safety. If you would; if you did not mind?"

"Then I will," she answered. "Shall we say three o'clock?"

"That will do excellently. Thank you. I have to go out for my father this morning, but I shall be back long before three o'clock."

So the bargain was made, and they parted good friends. Godfrey started with Croft, the head groom, in the dog-cart about midday, for a small village across country. Mr. Mayne was changing his under-groom, and Godfrey's errand was to enquire the character of a young man who had applied for the place.

But Godfrey was detained longer than he expected to be, and it was past three o'clock when he dashed in. He made his way at once to the churchyard. In it, to his surprise, he saw Sir William Hunt, walking up the pathway before him. The Baronet unceremoniously put his arm within that of the younger man.

"I thought I should find you somewhere about here," said he. "You said you would play the organ for me: Thornhill and your father told me I ought to hear it, you know; seemed to take it as a slight on the instrument that I had not yet been. Godfrey," he added, after a pause, dropping his voice, "I have been but twice to service in the church here since my boy died."

"And that is two years and a half ago, I think, sir."

"Yes, yes; it was at carnival time. Poor William, poor William!"

They were just inside the porch when the sweet and glorious tones

of one of the sweetest and most glorious voices ever heard, broke upon their ear in a sacred song.

Godfrey stood entranced, forgetting everything. He was recalled by a sharp, convulsive pressure upon his arm. Turning in alarm to Sir William, he saw his face likewise convulsed, as in an agony.

"You are ill, Sir William!" cried Godfrey.

"Hush! Listen!" responded Sir William; and Godfrey thought he must be affected by the magnificence of the singing.

But before the song had come to an end, a terrible remembrance flashed into Godfrey's brain, of what Sir William had said at the dinner-table. Of the woman with the sweet voice who had helped to lure his son to his death—the voice which was without compare, and which he should undoubtedly know again. The agony depicted in Sir William's face was equalled by that which sprang up in Godfrey's heart. Sir William touched him.

"It is the same voice and the same song. It must be the same woman. Let me go in and denounce her."

"Wait here," gasped Godfrey. "It will be best. She must come out this way. Wait for me."

Leaving Sir William in the porch, Godfrey went in and stole rapidly to the organ, at which Mary Dixon was seated. She felt a hand laid sharply on her shoulder, and looking round, was startled by the wild look of his pale face.

"Come here," said he in a very low voice, but with so much authority that she rose at his bidding. He still had his hand on her shoulder, and as soon as she was on her feet, he forced her across the narrow chancel with an energy which was little short of violence. The organ was on one side the chancel; the vestry was on the other, and the key was in the lock. Godfrey turned it, opened the door, and said "Go in there."

In her astonishment at this imperative movement, Mary had had neither breath nor presence of mind to resist; but she made a feeble show of it now, and would have drawn back. Godfrey pushed her in; shook off the hand which had placed itself in remonstrance on his coat-cuff, and locked the door.

All had passed so quietly that the girl who had been blowing, and was busily employed now in shutting the organ up with a great clatter, had noticed nothing. As Godfrey returned, she was coming forth, looked surprised to see him, and then gazed about her.

"Why, where's Miss Dixon, sir?" she asked.

"Miss Dixon is gone. And you had better go, too, as fast as you can. A gentleman is waiting outside to see the organ."

Away went the girl in swift commotion. And, just outside the church door, she came face to face with Sir William Hunt.

(To be continued.)

MY SATURDAYS.

HERMAN.

I.

HE was a poet and a drysalter. I have not the least idea, myself, what drysalting is; but I know that it is some occupation equally inimical to poetry and to gentility. Nevertheless, Herman Pothinger was also a gentleman. In addition to that, he was a hunchback. Can you put all these together, and realise a soul shut in upon all sides with limitations, beset with petty trials and great deprivations, and feeling them all the more deeply because his sufferings were vulgarised by the golden setting of his wealth. It might have consoled many people: he said to me once, when some had been paying him a good deal of attention: "I am an ugly picture set in a big gaudy frame; the gilding glitters so that the thing inside cannot be unnoticed."

He had not that way of escape, either, which true genius would have given him—genius that would have caught up his quivering nature, and carried it on eagle wings to the top of Olympus, to be satiated with the rapturous calm of the gods. We called him a poet, as friends and neighbours call anyone they know who can write pretty verses; but he was not one in the higher sense of the word, and he knew it. He had all a poet's keen sensibility, and suffered for it; but he had no creative genius, and little power of making others see what he saw, and feel what he felt. His verses were often clever, sometimes graceful, occasionally powerful, and always correct; but they were laboured and polished, and you felt that he would never do anything greater than he had done. This fact he had recognised himself, and determined to keep to his drysalting. I remember one afternoon, about a year after his father's death, he came into my drawing-room, where he had always been a tame cat, and threw himself down on the sofa. He liked the sofa, partly because his back was often painful—and partly, I think, because his deformity was not visible when he was lying down.

"Tired, Herman?" I said.

"Rather," he answered.

"Worried a little too, aren't you?"

"Well, yes. Life is somewhat more troublesome than usual today."

"What's the matter?"

"Some bother with my people at Nine Elms. A little plan which I thought would be for their good has turned out all wrong. I took a great deal of pains about it, and thought it would work, but they don't like it. I made a mess, I suppose, as usual."

"Herman," I said, "I wonder that you go on with that business."

"So do I," he answered, contemplating the ceiling.

"It is quite unsuited to your tastes."

"Cela va sans dire."

"It is not necessary for your support—or even comfort."

"Not exactly."

"It is a disadvantage to you socially."

"I am quite aware of that."

"Then why on earth don't you give it up?"

"And instead, do—what?"

"Travel, study, live in Italy, or Algeria, or the Rocky Mountains, or everywhere by turns, take in impressions, absorb nature, and write at your leisure such poetry as you will never write while you are oscillating between a Tamston villa and a London drysaltery."

He started up vehemently. "How can you!" he cried. "Don't I know every turn and twist of that wretched, sneaking temptation? I am to give up my honest father's honest business, because certain fools don't think it genteel. Snobs! they are the worst of snobs, who sentimentalize about hearts under smock-frocks, but can't see a man behind an apron, unless it be a bishop's!"

"I am sure you never wear an apron, Herman," I put in.

"Don't you be too sure of it then, or your feelings might receive a shock if you ever came near my place at Nine Elms. But I beg your pardon for supposing that anything could ever bring you to so plebeian a neighbourhood."

"You are not fair to me, Herman. You know I am not a snob. But when most people have certain prejudices, why should you put yourself at a disadvantage unnecessarily."

"It is not unnecessarily. Of course I could sell the business, and have enough to live a lazy, self-indulgent, solitary life, as I chose. But my mother would not have what she has been used to—luxuries, no doubt; but she would feel their loss now. My sisters would not have fortunes such as they have a right to expect. You know my poor father left every penny to me; I wish he hadn't. A great many things that I have money for now would miss it, and one or two would come to grief."

"Things?" I said interrogatively.

"There's a little hospital that couldn't very well get on by itself, and some other things. And why should I give up the little good I can do, and the work I was born to, and disappoint my own family? Why am I to do it?" he demanded, sitting up straight on the sofa.

"I am sure I don't know," I said, frightened by his vehemence into forgetting all the good reasons why he *should* do it.

"Yes; but you do know, and I know; I am to do it in order to dawdle, and lounge, and dream away my life, seeing pretty things, and calling it studying art; doing pleasant things, and calling it studying life; dozing with a cigar under the trees, and calling it studying

nature! And if emasculating one's soul into laziness and self-pleasing were the way to grow into a poet, nevertheless I should not be one at the end of a dozen years. I haven't it in me, and I know it. The worst time of my life was when I found that out; but now I've settled that matter with myself. No, Mrs. Singleton, God hasn't made a poet of me. I am nothing more than a dilettante, and a verse-spinning amateur, with a house full of bric-à-brac, a head full of Théophile Gautier, and a heart full of chips and sawdust."

"I beg your pardon," I said, "and if you have made up your mind that it is right for you to keep on the business, I will not tease you any more—but I must just say one thing."

"Well, what?"

"The social disadvantage is not merely a fanciful one. You might find it very practical when you wished to marry."

"As if any girl worth loving would love a thing like me!" he said, so bitterly that I dared not add another word.

After that conversation, I never (as may be supposed) tried again to induce Herman to cease to be a drysalter, and if anyone else did, he or she was equally unsuccessful. The Pothinger family continued to inhabit the gorgeous riverside villa, set in its border of grass-garden, like a large pie on a small dish; Mrs. and the Misses Pothinger still drove down the short avenue in their great carriage, and emerged at the gilt-topped gates, amid the curtseys of the lodge-keeper's little girls, to issue their orders at shop-doors to bareheaded attendants; and Herman still slipped quietly up and down to and from London by his daily trains, and when at home retreated to his own two rooms, the only ones in that big house that were really fit for a human being of sensibilities to inhabit, or else lived on the river. Taunton saw little of him in a general way; but he did not refuse any invitation which seemed really meant to be accepted, and he often came to me.

My Saturday afternoon parties were a very good thing for him. Coming to them regularly, he was drawn into a little clique of congenial spirits, and came to be on easy terms with others who were not congenial. People who were inclined to be shy of the rich tradesman found a difficulty in connecting him with the large-eyed, fragile cripple—whose refined face and painful limps appealed to their sympathies; and after a time, Herman Pothinger seemed more likely to be petted than snubbed, especially among the young ladies. I knew, however, that not one of those girls who begged to hear his poems, and were eager to get up conversation games under the trees, instead of playing tennis, would have dreamed of marrying a hunch-back, and that anyone who did would be held to have sold herself for money; and I sometimes feared that there might be a sharp sting hidden in their sweet fruit of courtesy, so freely offered him by fair hands.

In the midst of all his friendliness, a special intimacy with Charlotte

Stamwood soon began to grow up, and lift its head above the rest, like the rose bush in the middle of an old-fashioned flower-bed. (You see, in telling the story of a poet, I am growing poetical enough myself to use fanciful comparisons.) Charlotte, as I have said before, was our vicar's second daughter; and she was also chief clergywoman of the parish, and mainstay of the family. Miss Stamwood was very delicate, and Mrs. Stamwood belonged to the ignoble army of the Non-Effectives. She would have been much surprised to hear herself so classed; for her code of duty was not severe, and she fulfilled it to her own satisfaction. She had presented the Vicar with an amply sufficient family—there they were to testify; she worked at their clothes, and was seldom seen without a needle in her hand; she saw to their meals; they were on the whole as good-looking, healthy, well-dressed, and well-taught children as anybody else's. What more could be expected of a mother? And yet, for any real mothering, the children had to come to Charlotte, and they did not come in vain. So in the parish, Mrs. Stamwood presided (as beseemed her position) over the head class in the girls' Sunday-school, and taught them something—by help of Eugene Stock; once a week she looked in at the day-school, when the girls were at needlework, and criticised their stitches: and occasionally she sat for ten minutes in some old woman's cottage. School-teaching and visiting—what more could be expected of any parsoness? But it was Charlotte who toiled to bring the school up to inspection-pitch; it was Charlotte who knew the family history and individual shortcomings of every scholar; it was Charlotte who dressed children's scalds, and gave her opinion upon old women's bad legs, and sat up at night with sick girls, at critical times.

Thus it came to be natural to her to cherish to be good to any small or weak creature that came near her; and if she saw anyone who wanted anything done for them, temporally or spiritually, her first impulse was to take them in hand in her strong, gentle, effective way. She soon found out that Herman Pothinger wanted a great deal done for him, and naturally proceeded to do it. The pathos in his eyes implored her every day they met; and every day she would join him in literary discussions, and talks about higher things, purely and merely in order to help one who was much tried to bear his burden. It was very nice of her; it was pretty to see such unconsciousness, and it was pleasant to watch Herman brightening out of his hopeless self-repression; but that would happen when she discovered that he was simply humanly in love with her, and he discovered that she had been succouring him as a distressed parishioner?

I knew better by this time than to lift a finger to make or mar a match, so I waited to see.

II.

WINTER had come, and only the ghost of my Saturdays had survived the dull afternoons and pale twilights. By the time the January floods

had gone down, and a long frost set in with February, I began to feel quite at liberty to dispose of myself on the day which had formerly been appropriated to hospitality. Consequently I did not feel bound to be churlish when Herman Pothinger came in one Friday evening to entreat me to go to his villa the next day.

"I am going to have an entertainment, Mrs. Singleton, on Saturday, of my own; but you seem to have a sort of vested interest in that day of the week, which will make me feel as if I had stolen it unless you condone my audacity by your presence."

"Oh, I'm not such a dog in the manger as to wish to keep a monopoly that I cannot use," I said; "besides, it is a very good exchange to be entertained instead of entertaining. What is to be the shape of your festivity?"

"Pretty nearly the shape of the field next the garden, at the back of the house. It is nearly all flooded, from the overflowing of the pond in the corner, and the ice is magnificent. I have had it swept and watered until it is a perfect rink, and the weather is safe: there is not a sign of a thaw. So my mother and the girls are asking everybody who can put on skates or cares to look on, and we will have a jolly afternoon. There will be music to skate to, and torches, and so on—and tea, of course."

"Torches and tea; that is irresistible, provided I am not expected to walk round and round the pond all the afternoon, and pretend I am warm."

"Not a bit of it; you shall have a warm place to creep into, and a pretty place, too—you'll see. Only come."

Of course I went. The skaters had assembled to luncheon at two, and were vigorously at work when I arrived. Although Herman's invitation had been short, on account of the uncertainty of all things glacial in England, his preparation had been ample. All round the little lake, bright-coloured bands looped up curtains of rough, dark stuff, supported by poles and ropes, so as to shelter the guests both from wind and from the eyes of the curious outside. Inside the circle were seats in abundance, with footstools and rugs, and chaufferettes for cold feet, while tea and coffee came hot from a nice little stove, presided over by a cosy maid. A band was established under shelter at a discreet distance, and the strains of lively dance music timed the movements of the performers. It was a glorious day, and the sight was a pretty one. Round and round they swept, back and forwards, swaying, gliding, whirling—rosy faces, soft furs, active figures; the air was alive with chatter and laughter and music, and a half moon floated in the steel-blue sky, unextinguished by the pale sunlight, and looked down on the scene, taking no part in the mirth, but not disapproving of the poor mortals who could still laugh. Herman was one of these; he did not seem to feel it a trial that he could not join the fun on the ice, but moved about, playing the host to perfection, seeing to everyone's wants, and making him-

self thoroughly pleasant. I had never seen him to such advantage as on his own ground. The affection which I entertained for him did not in the least extend to his mother and sisters; pretentious, uninteresting women, I thought them, and the less I saw of them the better I was pleased.

The afternoon slipped on pleasantly; when people grew tired of the pond they could go into the house, or through the big greenhouses, which crowded up the moderate-sized garden. It began to grow dark, and then the promised torches came into play. Chinese lanterns were hung from all the posts, the bonfires were lit, and torches were handed to the skaters. A row of little lanterns crossed the ice, and shut off one corner; this marked the position of the original pond, the source of the overflow. I knew that it was deep, and contained one of the strong springs not uncommon in our part of the Thames Valley, and applauded Herman's prudence.

About eight o'clock, Herman began giving instructions to the gentlemen skaters, from which I augured that something was going to take place. A great deal of commotion followed, but after much talking and moving about, the skaters got themselves arranged in pairs in a long procession, headed by Dr. Carfield and Cherry Roper, whose engagement had just been announced.* The band struck up a delicious waltz, and the long train glided off, closely following the leading pair. This was one of the prettiest things I had ever seen. The coil of lights swept round and round in curves and tangles, following the erratic movements of its leaders, entwining, disentangling, wreathing its live flames into fanciful figures—the light-bearers only visible as dark forms rushing past the blazing fires on the bank—and no sound but a subdued murmur of voices, below the music that harmonised their motions.

Herman was standing by me, watching, when the band ceased playing, and the procession gathered itself into groups, and came to the bank. Charlotte Stamwood glided up to us, excited beyond her wont.

"Oh! I wish it could have lasted for ever," she said. "To go on and on like that, in the darkness and the light, and the music—it was like nothing else: it was fairyland. That was a glorious idea of yours, Mr. Pothinger; it was so good of you to think of giving us such a pleasure."

"I can imagine the delight of using one's muscles, nearly as well as if I had any worth using," he replied; "perhaps better. Perhaps I fancy it to be even a greater joy than it is."

Charlotte looked at him pitifully, all her gaiety gone. In the revulsion from her excited enjoyment, her eyes filled with tears. Herman saw it.

"But now," he said, "I want everybody to come in and have supper. am so glad you have enjoyed the end of the day, Miss Stamwood,

* See "Cherry Roper's Penance," Argosy, October, 1883.

for I have watched you all the afternoon devoting yourself to the children, and dragging about those two awkward Miss Bushes, whom you will never make skaters of until you can make them sylphs."

"I am sure *I* am not a sylph, though I am a skater," rejoined Charlotte. "Proof positive: did you ever hear of a sylph whose heart danced within her at the prospect of supper? Yet such is my degrading position at present, in spite of a most un-sylphlike luncheon at two, and afternoon tea ad libitum."

"Nothing like winter air for giving one an appetite," I remarked. Herman took off her skates, and we all proceeded to the house, where a very substantial meal was in readiness, which people who had not been imbibing the best Moning for half the afternoon would have called a meat tea. Herman placed himself between us, and we had a very lively time, Charlotte being particularly kind to him in her motherly way. When we rose to leave the table, however, she discovered that she had lost one of her bracelets.

"I know I had it on when we began the torch-dance," she said; "I remember setting it over my glove."

"Is it a valuable one?" I asked.

"Not very; but I would not lose it for a great deal. My brother Robert gave it to me before he went to sea; he had been saving up his pocket money to buy it for ever so long, dear boy! Oh! I hope it may be found, even if it is broken. Mr. Pothinger, will you let me have a lantern, and I will go down to the pond and look for it at once?"

"I will go myself," he answered; "you must have dropped it on the ice; you shall have it again in a few minutes." And before we could say a word to him he was gone.

Charlotte and I waited uncomfortably for a few minutes, not knowing what else to do; and then she said suddenly:

"Mrs. Singleton, I don't like it at all. He went off in such a hurry, he may not have taken a servant with him, and it is not safe for him to go upon that ice. It is like glass now, after the day's skating."

"I am afraid you are right," I said: "but what can we do?"

"Go down after him, of course; do come at once!"

She hurried me out; we hastily snatched up somebody's wraps from a chair in the hall, and ran down the garden. All the paths were still lighted, so we had no trouble in reaching the enclosure. Charlotte eagerly lifted a curtain, and we passed inside. The Chinese lantern had been removed; but the bonfires were burning, and by their light we saw Herman in the middle of the pond, alone, slowly making his way along, stooping and examining the ice by the light of the lantern which he held. Charlotte caught my hand.

"Don't call out to him," she said; "it might startle him, and make him slip. Oh! I shall never forgive myself if he is hurt."

He was moving along the cord which marked off the dangerous

part of the pond. Presently he gave an exclamation, and we saw his light glitter on something lying just inside the line. He stooped under to pick it up, and in doing so his foot slipped, he fell on his back, and slid along the ice. There was a crack, a splash of water, and his lantern lay broken, the light inside giving a moment's glimpse of a dark ugly hole, and a flood of water, swallowing up the glossy surface. I shrieked for help; Charlotte gave one clear loud cry, and rushed down, and on to the ice, I after her. When we reached the hole, Herman's white face had risen, and he was clinging to the ice, which broke away under his hands.

"Stretch out your arms and reach," cried Charlotte; "don't hold it with your hands. Don't struggle; help is coming." She laid herself down flat on the ice, and drew herself towards the hole. "Kneel down, Mrs. Singleton; hold my feet with all your strength."

I obeyed, and she stretched out her hands until she could clasp Herman's numbed fingers in the freezing water.

"I have him," she cried. "Now call—call with all your might."

I called, but no one came. The thick curtains shut in our cries; the ice cracked and cracked; the bitter cold water came flooding round us, soaking us to the skin, chilling us to the bone; what was it for that fragile creature, plunged in it up to his neck?

"He must be got out," said Charlotte. "Let me move forward a little."

She pushed herself nearer to him, and slid her hands up to his arms. The ice broke away as she dragged him forward, but they were moving shorewards, and presently he got his foot on the bottom. He raised himself; she clasped him round the body; and using all her strength, and helped by me, rose to her knees and her feet, and lifted him out. Then Herman spoke the first word that he had uttered. He had sunk without a cry; he was drowning mutely; he had not spoken during the long struggle. Now he said:

"You have saved my life: but you have only saved what was your own. I am yours, body and soul."

Then he staggered, and fainted.

III.

Our joint adventure and wetting affected the three of us in varying degrees. Charlotte went about her work as usual the next day, and laughed at the numerous enquiries after her health; I caught a violent cold, but was not materially the worse; Herman fell seriously ill. The fall, the shock, and the chill were more than enough to account for any consequences to so delicate an organisation, and I feared the worst. Shut up in my room for several days, I could only send to enquire, and had to be content with the official bulletins issued by Mrs. Pothinger, on the authority of the great London physician who patronised Dr. Carfield's treatment. These wore to my mind an obvious air of "making the best of it"—which I distrusted. I was

therefore doubly glad to see Charlotte Stamwood enter my room on the first day when I was sitting up. After mutual enquiries, &c., I asked her if her father had seen Herman lately.

"Yes," she said, gravely; "he was there yesterday, but he can only stay for a few minutes at a time. Mr. Pothinger likes to see him, but he is in too great pain to be able even to listen long—much less speak."

"Then he has not made much progress towards getting well yet?"

"I don't think he has begun."

"Oh, Charlotte," I cried, the tears starting into my eyes, for I felt weak and low, "what a miserable ending to such a pleasant day!"

"If you feel that," she answered, "what do you suppose I feel? I—who was enjoying myself all day like a child, using his unselfish thoughtfulness as if it were a matter of course, taking all the good of the pleasures he had given, but could never share; and then let him go to his death on my errands."

"You could not have stopped him," I said; "it is absurd to blame yourself."

"I could, if I had thought of it in time; but I was only thinking of my bracelet. It was clutched in his hand when I pulled him out; I have it now: he ought to have thrown it in my face, like the lady's glove in Schiller's ballad."

"Charlotte," I said severely; "it is not like you to be so morbid. You never asked or wished Herman to go for it; nobody could have anticipated that if he did go he would come upon the unsafe ice; you did your utmost to stop him, and if he lives, your courage and presence of mind will have saved his life. If he dies, it may be the happiest thing for him, for life had not much to offer him, and it will be sweet to him to die in serving you."

"That is the worst of it," she said in a low tone. "I cannot bear to think of his dying; and yet, what shall I do if he gets well?"

I was silent.

"You heard what he said before he fainted?"

"Yes."

"Can't you help me? I would not ask you if I had not thought and cried myself stupid in trying to see what is right?"

"My dear Charlotte, it doesn't exactly seem to me a matter of right or wrong. Consult your own heart."

"My heart! Mrs. Singleton, you don't fancy that I can be in love with him, poor fellow!"

"It did not seem probable, of course. Still, you are not like all other girls, and you seemed to like talking to him, and so on. I must own that I did think you were fond of him."

"Fond of him! that is exactly what I am. I wanted to try and comfort him, and help him along a bit, just as one takes a tired child by the hand; and now he turns round, and begs to be taken up in my arms! And I am so sorry for him, and he is so good, and loves me

so, that I would do anything for him, if he were my brother or my cousin, or it could be done in any way but by marrying him."

"Of course you could not be expected to give up your life to such a task, unless you really loved him."

"You don't understand," she said, impatiently. "It is not the giving up my life; we must give it up to something or somebody, and it might as well be to Herman as to the schools and the parish; it is the—the—disgracefulness of the thing. You know what he is—poor fellow, there is no denying that he is terribly deformed; nobody would believe that I loved him for himself, and I could not say that I did, in lover's fashion. And he is so horribly rich; everybody would say that I did it for that; and they would congratulate me to my face, and sneer at me behind my back; and mamma would be so pleased to have me drive up in the carriage with a footman, and papa would never quite understand or believe in me again. I should not have sold myself, but I should feel as if I had. And after all, if one gives the goods, and receives the money, I suppose it is a sale?"

"The real price paid to you would be the power of filling Herman's life with sunshine," I said, foolishly.

"Do you think I ought, Mrs. Singleton? Are you persuading me?"

"Oh, no; not for worlds," I cried, terrified. "If you could have genuinely loved him, I think I should have felt that it was a beautiful thing; but such love as his is not to be repaid with mere pity and sisterliness, and sooner or later, he would feel the deficiency, and he would know that you were chafing under the falseness of your position. He is too sensitive not to be conscious of your feelings in any close relation."

"Then there seems to be no help for it," she said, with a sigh; "and he must learn to do without even the little that I have been giving him. Oh, poor Herman, poor Herman; why should he be refused everything?"

She sat looking into the fire, while her tears dropped slowly, and mine kept her company; for what else was there to do, while he lay in fevered misery, tossing between lonely death and lonely life?

IV.

As soon as I was able to go out, I bent my steps to Alexandra Villa, and was fortunate enough to meet Dr. Carfield at the gate. I asked him how his patient was getting on.

"He is much easier, and has little pain now; in that sense he is better. But there has been long-dormant mischief, which has now been aroused, and I have great fear for the result. In fact, his condition is very serious, and I would not answer for his life from one day to another."

"Is he conscious?"

"Oh, perfectly. I should think he would like to see you, if you would go up."

"I should wish it very much indeed."

Dr. Carfield returned to the house, and the matter was soon arranged. I was taken along the thickly-carpeted passages to Herman's cosy little sitting-room, once an artistic snuggery, where only the profusion of smoking material betrayed the sex of the owner. Now the pipes and tobacco were all neatly stowed away; a table covered with a white cloth bore glasses and medicines; and all the paraphernalia of scientific nursing stood ready in obtrusive order and cleanliness. A double curtain hung before the door, to deaden the sounds of the outer world, which at one time the tortured nerves of the sick man had not been able to bear. We passed through into the bedroom; a quiet nurse in uniform rose and left it as we entered, and in another minute I was alone with Herman.

He did not look as much changed as I had expected. His face had always been thin and pale, and his eyes large; and it did not make much difference in him, but now he was thinner, paler, and larger-eyed. I clasped his hand (what a skeleton it was, and what a feeble pressure it gave!), and said a few cheerful words about being glad that he was well enough to see me.

"Yes!" he said brightly, "so am I. Nurse Piper is the best of company for a mind disposed to reflection! for she takes the body thereto appertaining so completely under her charge that the proprietor feels no responsibility, and she never interferes with the higher mental exercises by frivolous remarks; nevertheless, do you know, I find her a trifle dull."

"I should think so," I said. "Now that you are well enough, I will come every day, if you like, and tell you everything that goes on in the world."

"Do, like a dear woman. I have not read a paper, nor heard a bit of gossip for thirteen days, and I still care about news from this world more than I ought, but I can't help it. So go ahead now, and tell me about everything."

I sat and chatted away to the best of my ability, Herman occasionally making remarks. At last I thought he ought to be quiet, and rose to leave.

"Are you going?" he said. "Well, you have been very good; and uow I want you to do something more for me."

"I will do it, if possible," I answered.

"Ask Miss Stamwood if she will come with you to morrow."

"Charlotte! My dear Herman, I am not sure that she would, or that she ought."

"What do conventionalities matter now?" he demanded. "She is braver than that."

"Yes, if it were to do you any real good. But I fear it will only do you harm."

"Do you fancy," he said scornfully, "that a dying hunchback is going to make love to her, or to take her visit for anything but gracious charity? Go to her, and tell her that I shall soon be beyond the reach and the need of her pity and help, but that I need her now. Tell her that those few mad words which broke from me that night were true—*true;* but they only told the truth—they did not mean a request, scarcely even a wish. I am hers, for life and death; but if I were to live, I would never ask her to be mine, she need not fear me. Ask her to come, that I may see her once more."

I asked her and she came.

She sat down by his bed, while I withdrew to the window; and as his poor thin hand lay on the coverlet, she clasped it in her own warm fingers, as frankly as a sister. On her wrist she wore the bracelet. He looked at it with a smile.

"I am so glad I kept hold of it."

"It has cost you too much," she answered.

"It has cost me nothing," he replied. "I am used to bodily pain; I rather like it, it is a change from the other; and what is life to such as I?"

She looked down, and her lips trembled.

"To lie here and hold your hand, and look at that bracelet, which tells me that I have been able to do something for you—is all that I can desire on this side of the grave."

"It is not much," said Charlotte.

"It is more than I have ever had before. You can scarcely realise how intensely lonely my life has been, with the great barrier of separation always between me and other men. As soon as I began to realise what any joy would be like, I had to go on and realise that it was not for me. That has been hard work sometimes."

"It *was* hard," she murmured.

"I have always been lonely, and hungry, and out in the cold," he went on, dreamily. "Now I feel as if the sun were shining on me—just a little glint, before it sets and the moon rises—the pale moon of Paradise, that gleams on scentless flowers."

"Paradise seems dim and pale to you," said Charlotte, brokenly, "because earth has been so dreary that you cannot believe in happiness. Oh, Herman, I cannot bear to let you go so. Live for my sake, and I will make life bright for you, until we are ready to go hand-in-hand to the deeper brightness beyond." She threw herself on her knees beside the bed, and gazed into his eyes.

"Is it possible?" he said, a slow ecstasy gathering in his face.

"Yes, it is possible," she answered fervently. "I will care for you, love you, make you happy; I will be your wife."

"All for me," he said, laying his hand on her head. "What for you?"

"The joy of doing it. Herman, it would make me happy."

"No," he answered, as his smile faded; "it would not. Not

happy as you ought to be. And I should not be happy, because I should be false to myself. I have long known that love and marriage were not for me. I have dared to love, and I bear the penalty, or rather, I have borne it, for penalties will soon be over."

"It need not be so," she pleaded: "consent to live; set your will to it; and you shall know what happiness is."

"Would you tempt me, dear, when I am too weak to resist long? I know what is right now; I may not be able to hold to it five minutes longer; but if so, I pray that I may die in four."

"Oh, hush," said Charlotte, rising from her knees. "Forgive me; I will not say another word; only let me be good to you, and do what I can."

"Then raise me a little; the pillows hurt my back, and I feel faint."

I went out to the nurse, who gave me food for him. When I brought it back, Charlotte was sitting on the bed, supporting Herman in her arms, his head lying on her shoulder. He looked at me with a smile.

"I have got a new mother, you see."

I gave him a spoonful or two.

"I can't take more," he said. "It doesn't matter." Then he looked up at Charlotte.

"Will you kiss me?"

She bent her head, and kissed the white upturned face that lay on her arm.

"This is heaven," he said, and closed his eyes.

When he looked again it *was* heaven.

VERA SINGLETON.

STAR-RISE.

FROM the last pale glow in the west that died,
A star shone over the sea:
Far down in the south a low wind sighed,
And soft came its voice to me:—
"Good night! for thy star is shining."

In the tender grace of the twilight fair,
A maiden walked by the sea:
I looked, and the dream of my dreams was there:—
And soft sang the wind to me:—
"Good night! for thy star is shining."

A. M. H.

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S.
Author of "Through Holland," "The Cruise of the Reserve Squadron," &c.

Leading to the Creux Harbour.

WE were fortunate, in Sark, in having the moon at the full. Thus the nights were as beautiful as the days; nay more so. The silvery light brought out in dark, mysterious relief all the deep valleys, illuminated the broad stretches of moorland, solemnized the cliffs and rocks, made visible distant objects upon the flat table-land. The far off windmill, with sails for ever turning, as if, like Sysiphus, their work was never done, seemed in the moonlight to whirl its ghostly arms in a phrensy of despair. It was always going, this mill; whether we passed it by day or night, the rush and creaking of its wings might be heard above the roaring of the wind and the beating of the rain.

An amiable man was the Miller of Sark—for having no rival, we may give him this distinguishing title. And he was to be envied, as every one living in Sark is to be envied, though they know it not. He looked the picture of health and contentment, and in his white, floury suit was a cheerful and conspicuous object as he walked to and from his mid-day meal.

More than once, on coming across him at these times, we accompanied him to the threshold of his little home, and enlivened the way by fragments of gossip. They were all primitive and interesting, these people of Sark, and seemed blessed with an innate courtesy more to be desired than a polished manner which goes no deeper than the surface. True, we found the old shoemaker a somewhat

rough exception; but he had "travelled," and in extending his knowledge of mankind perhaps had lost his simplicity. Moreover he had not "stuck to his last," but had renounced his trade in favour of farming, had waxen fat and abundant, and was not to be lightly esteemed. Finally, we bearded the lion in his den at feeding time, and the steam from a savoury mess of pottage rose from the table like incense upon the air. So perhaps irritation and abruptness on the part of the Cobbler of Sark were to be overlooked. There were extenuating circumstances: Ventre affamé n'a point d'oreilles.

The exterior of the miller's house, like himself, was comely to look upon. A small garden led up to the creeper-laden porch. Flowers abounded, as they do in so many of the Sark cottages; large tree-fuchsias, calceolarias, and hydrangeas; plants blooming in the open air that in England we find often only in hothouses. It gave the habitations a refinement that lifted them above the ordinary level of their kind. They were evidently well cared for; their owners took pride in them; the inmates themselves must be out of the common. Here and there an aspiring attempt had substituted for its lattice a plate-glass window, but it was out of keeping with its simpler surroundings.

But with the miller all things were in harmony, and the interior, as neat as a new pin, as orderly as a museum, announced the careful housewife. He seemed happy as a king, scarcely knew an idle day, had many hungry mouths to feed. We offered him our sympathy in his matrimonial responsibilities, but it was lost upon him. He was one of those men whose contentment is a continual feast. They are the greatest of philosophers, and in passing through life, it is doubtful if they have not the best of it.

These cottages, with gardens well-tended and flower-laden, are one of the features of Sark, where features, beyond those bestowed by nature, are limited. There are a few better houses—such as that inhabited by the doctor—and then we come to the Seigneurie.

The Seigneur of Sark is lord of the manor. It was intimidating to be told, before going there, that he had complete power over the inhabitants; was a despotic monarch; could try cases at will, pass sentences, imprison, hang, behead. In short, he might have been to the full-grown imagination what Bluebeard is to the youthful fancy. Fortunately for our peace of mind, we could not discover that there was any prison upon the island, and we certainly saw neither block nor gibbet, nor chamber of torture. Moreover, we felt persuaded that to the people of Sark the greater crimes of the Decalogue must be unknown. The infirmities of human nature no doubt are theirs; some of its faults, follies, and foibles; but it was plain to any physiognomist that here they drew the line. The Seigneur, as administrator of justice, can be acquainted only with "maiden sessions," and if he is not presented with the customary white gloves, it must be that the primitive Sercquois know nothing of the

ceremony, or that in Sark they would be, like a white elephant, only too often a superfluous luxury.

The Seigneurie is the only place in Sark of any importance, so far as we discovered; the only spot in which one feels in some degree to have returned to the world. The remainder of the island may be said to have remained in a state of nature, and here lies one of its greatest charms. The house, picturesque, though not uniform in style, stands within grounds that may be described as a cultivated wilderness of great beauty. Tall Indian grasses and weeping trees reflect themselves in silent pools; small avenues lend their shade and retire-

THE SEIGNEURIE.

ment; an absence of set walks, straight paths and planned flower beds delights the wanderer; a few tropical plants and the waving grasses so common to the Channel Islands, and so graceful, inspire the imagination with something of an eastern glow. Fruit trees and flowers were there, but their primness and regularity are concealed behind high walls. This no doubt is necessary in a small island, where the influence of the sea and the fury of the gales would soon put an end to all tender and unprotected plants. For the Seigneurie is not far from the sea. It is in itself a small paradise within the larger paradise of Sark.

But Sark itself is small, being about three miles long by a mile and a half broad. Yet it is so diversified, possesses so much that is interesting, has such deep valleys and declivities, an abundance of

such magnificent rock scenery, that its limited area is never realised. In all else, indeed, it is great; has a strong influence upon mind and imagination; takes firm hold of the affections; is the Queen and the Pearl of islands.

Every day we loved it more. The roads, the breezy heights, the sombre valleys, the long stretches of heather ending in abrupt precipices, all grew familiar, never tame or monotonous. There was—I have said it before—an indescribable charm about Sark. It was subtle, ever present, almost tangible, yet could not be uttered. In all weathers it was there. If the sun shone, the sky simply laughed for joy, and the earth responded. All nature was lighted up with happiness. From head to foot one seemed to absorb health, the very

In the Seigneurie Grounds.

breath of life. It was impossible to receive it sufficiently. The hours flew on silent wings. One longed to put back the sun, not ten but fifty degrees, and stay the glass of time that ran in such golden sands.

On the other hand, if the skies were gloomy and the sun was lost behind gathering clouds, the island threw up a deep rich tone full of grandeur. One hardly knew which aspect to like best, the sunny or the sad. The latter certainly predominated during our stay. Hours of sunshine we had, inexpressibly lovely, and days of gloom inexpressibly fine. It was nothing but a series of gales, one after another, and they were gales full of earnestness. Tremendous seas, furious winds, that would sometimes lull for an hour or two, only to gather fresh strength and rage, drenching rains that seemed to threaten a second deluge. But the rain fortunately was less constant than the wind, and seldom kept us at home.

Day after day, the market boat said "To-morrow we shall start," and day after day she was still to be found within the little harbour. It was impossible to attempt to cross over to Guernsey. No steamer arrived, telegraphic communication did not exist, the primitive little post-office had holiday, Sark was cut off from the world. Delicious rest and repose! For my own part, a month of such experience would have been too short a term; but H., I could see, would never have stood it. As day followed day he grew uneasy, and in tones more and more anxious, would say, "Suppose we are kept here for three weeks or a month?" I knew quite well that would not happen. One's opportunity—let us say it again—always comes; and through life we find that it almost always comes at the right moment. The necessity that must be met and can no longer be delayed brings the occasion. And—without desire to preach—why not? We are not children of chance and we are not here by chance. Chance is not, or ought not to be, the pilot of our life's little bark. Stormy waves and tempests we have, adverse winds that threaten to overwhelm, and rough seas that seem about to engulf; yet if the helm is only left to the guidance of a Higher Hand, even in this world we are certain of our haven. But, alas, that is our too frequent mistake; come what may, we take the direction into our own keeping, and blindly steer for all sorts of unseen rocks and shoals; and shipwreck of some sort or other—it may be moral, mental, material, our life's happiness, or our best hopes and ambitions—is the end of it all.

Coming down one morning we heard that the market boat had really gone at last. The sea was still rough, the winds blew, she would have a nasty passage enough, but they had ventured. Discomfort they did not mind, and, this morning, of danger there was none. So once more we felt put into communication with the outer world.

Night came, and we went down to meet the return of the little craft. It was about eight o'clock, and a most glorious evening. A strong wind was abroad, and immense detachments of clouds travelled quickly across the sky, casting deep lights and shadows upon the island. It was about the time of full moon, and her light was pure, silvery, and very vivid. The sky was gemmed with brilliant stars and moving constellations. Silence and solitude reigned over the face of the island. There was no sound anywhere, except in the wind, which seemed to fill all space, rustled the few trees we passed, and whistled and shivered through the hedges.

We left the inn, went down the hill, through the little gate, and across the shallow stream. Yet shallow as it was—not up to one's ankle in water—an old man had one day been found lying there, face downwards, drowned. He had lived to be one of the patriarchs of the island, only to come to this at last. Up another hill—thus following the road indicated by the old dame who had counselled us to "gome down the gommon"—and out into a narrow muddy land that seemed almost a quicksand. From this quagmire on to the broad

road, and passing a few solitary-looking houses, we found the long, steep hill leading to the Creux Harbour. One of the loveliest bits of Sark, to-night its beauty seemed almost more apparent than by day. Its charms, softened and in part hidden, appealed more vividly to the imagination. Trees met overhead in one long, unbroken arch, and the moonlight glinted through the branches and the leaves and cast shadows across our path. The road seemed interminable, for it was our first visit to the harbour. At length we reached the high cliffs, and the tunnels through which one must pass to enter or to leave the island; immediately beyond these was the little port.

It was a strange and powerful scene. The boat having safely braved the perils of the sea, was lying at the harbour steps. For the first time we found ourselves the centre of quite a crowd, on the stone pier. Everyone was excited, and everyone chattered in wonderful Sark patois. They might have been so many magpies wrangling over their possessions, and to us they were not one whit more intelligible than those sensible but mischievous birds.

The little crowd had come down to meet the boat, claim their goods, and hear the news. It was a mixture of satisfaction at commissions well executed, vexation at wishes only half carried out, and downright abuse where orders had been altogether forgotten: a Babel without its tower. Half a dozen carts and nondescript vehicles were ranged from the pier to the drawbridge at the entrance to the tunnel, and these were being laden with discharged cargo: bread, flour, meat, furniture—a medley and an accumulation. Philip de Carteret, one of the group, received a fresh store for the little shop his wife kept, the only one in the island, as far as we knew. He was also purveyor of literature to the inhabitants, and carried away a bundle of Guernsey newspapers, the only record to some of them of an outer and more active world. One man walked off with a table upon his head—perhaps he was about to set up housekeeping with some neat-handed Phyllis—and the twisted legs in the centre looked in the semi-gloom like some unknown and terrible thing of life.

Breakwater and people were thrown out in strong relief by the moon; the sea beyond, angry and tempestuous, dashed against the rocks and the stonework; the high and massive cliffs were in deeper shadow. A few boats in the harbour tossed restlessly at their moorings. The silent majesty of the dark sky above, of the clouds that travelled in such swift detachments, was in strange contrast with the excited scene below: this handful of men and women, unsparing of their gestures, whose voices echoed in all the surrounding cliffs and caves.

Then the little cavalcade moved off, a singular procession. One after another they passed through the tunnel, and began the long up-hill climb, and left the little harbour to solitude, the calm moonlight, the dark shadows, the beating and breaking waves. We followed in their wake. Once at the top of the hill, each went his way.

We varied ours; passed by the churlish old cobbler's, whose lighted window proved that he had not yet sought that repose so necessary to an irritable brain; down by the windmill, with its ghostly and revolving arms; and then, leaving the high road, plunged into the inequalities and uncertainties of fields and valleys.

In time we found we had safely done the common, crossed the shallow stream and passed through the gate. Beyond this we were on our own territories, and a few moments found us in the snug shelter and seclusion of the inn. Blinds were down and curtains drawn, a bright lamp stood on the table, the flames of a roaring fire flew up the chimney, H. was once more in the paradise of fire-wor-

A Bit of Sark.

shippers. In that glorious night I could have remained out for hours, enjoying the moonlight and the clouds, the dark heathery stretches, the lonely valleys and the restless sea: everything in nature that was solemn and suggestive. And the strong wind that blew was neither harsh nor cold: it never seemed so here, either by night or day, but was unspeakably delicious and bracing, no matter how strong, or whence its quarter. As a rule, much wind is an abomination, at least to the present writer: in Sark it was a luxury and a blessing.

And it was always thus. Stormy days and nights succeeded each other, and the little island was in harmony with them. Even the autumn season, with its subdued tints and falling leaves, was a sort of minor key that adapted itself to the restless elements—a minor key, yet without melancholy.

That night walk to the Creux Harbour to reconnoitre the little market boat was only one of many. Especially I remember one more than usually boisterous evening, when nothing would move H. from his chimney-corner, and I wandered alone down to Dixcart Bay.

The scene was utterly desolate; no sight of creature and no sound of life. The moonlit valley was grandeur itself. The sea broke against the rocks with a noise of thunder. A few steps more and there was the little beach, and the pebbles and stones were crunching beneath one's feet. Immense waves swept in and broke upon the shore with tremendous force. They dashed up the rocks, until the very earth seemed to vibrate with the shock, swirled over the "Giant's Leg," and poured through the arch with a hissing roar, whilst showers of spray

Our "Little Gate."

seemed to reach to the very table-land of the island. The whole sea, lighted up by the moon, was a restless, surging waste, and the waves died out in masses of foam, white as driven snow. On and on crept the tide, with rapid strides, swishing over the stones, until at last the shore was covered, and one had to beat a retreat.

Within the territory of the inn, the funny old goat, perched on its bit of rock, looked for a moment at the solitary wayfarer, and then, as if recognizing a friend, jumped down with plaintive bleat, and came the length of its tether to have its head rubbed, and to protest against being left the long lone night a prey to these raging elements.

But our excursions by day, with Philip de Carteret for our guide, charmed us most. He knew every inch of the island, and by paths invisible to the uninitiated would take us up and down rocks and cliffs that seemed impregnable. Sark is famous for its caves, and

they are numerous and interesting, though not very deep or profound, and therefore not mysterious. Of them, the Gouliots and the Boutiques are the principal, and some of them can only be seen at certain states of the tide, and at the time of full moon. Even then you must be careful not to stay too long, or you may have to wade out through advancing waters.

One morning we started for the Gouliot caves. We had to cross the island, and, passing through a field or two, reached the Gouliot rocks, some of the finest and grandest of Sark. Here, at the summit of the cliffs, were two ladies. It was the first time we had come upon anyone in our rambles, and it was one of the least pleasant days, for, in addition to wind and clouds, there was rain. These ladies were evidently bent upon the same mission as ourselves. One of them, however, either took fright at this unexpected and masculine reinforcement, or at the rugged and really terrific-looking cliffs that had to be scaled, and gave up the attempt. She sat herself down on a projecting bit of rock, like Patience on a monument, whilst her companion more bravely followed in our wake.

The descent seemed almost perilous. How the fair lady managed we could only imagine; she was independent, and would not accept help, and therefore the only alternative was to leave her to make her way unnoticed.

At last we found ourselves at the mouth of the caves, but our difficulties were not over; rather they had only begun. There were caves within caves, caves beyond caves. Of course, the inner cave was the most interesting, but it could not be seen without wading through deep waters. They were gloomy, these caves, though not dark. The sides were in parts smooth as a built-up wall, but rugged and protruding where most obscure, so that an unwary head might receive its quietus when least expected, or at least a blow that no skull but an Irishman's could stand against. The walls were covered with barnacles, sponges, sea anemones, exquisite specimens of zoophytes and corallines; such a collection and such colours, surely, as can only be found here and there in the earth's recesses. The walls were gemmed and studded with these wonders and curiosities of sea life.

An arched opening admitted from one cave to the other, but this troublesome pool lay between. For once we had to accept our guide's help. Hoisted on his shoulders, he staggered across the slippery and uneven bottom, and high and dry, landed us on the other side. But how about the lady? He returned and offered to carry her over in his arms, which could have been done quite easily and without much loss of dignity. She would none of it, and he came on to us. The cave, at least sixty feet high, was splendid. It reached upwards like a temple dome, and was almost circular. Light came from above; our voices echoed solemnly in the deep recesses of the roof, the angles of the walls. The centre was a pool of water, and the further side, shrouded in darkness, might have led

into endless regions: they were beyond our reach: we had had enough of wading at another's expense. In the very middle of the pool there was sure to be an uncomfortable stagger and a dead pause, and the next movement might mean safety and dry land, or a plunge head over heels into an icy cold bath. Now; given, a cold bath: found, an attack of acute rheumatism.

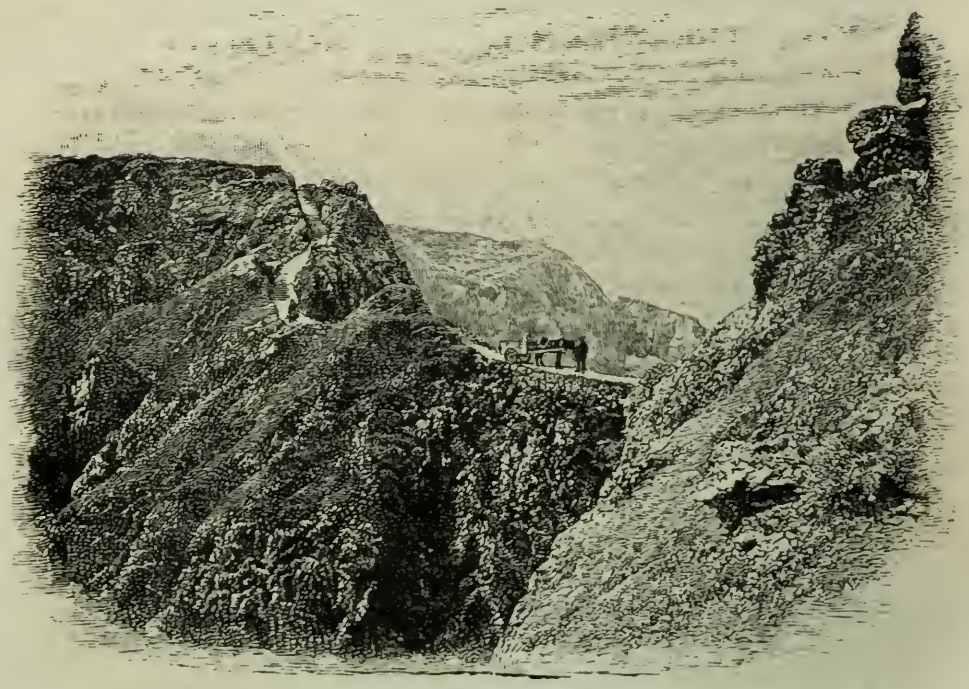
Suddenly, as we looked, an almost imperceptible shadow—a sort of sensation such as is supposed to take possession of one at the approach of a ghost, fell upon us, and the next moment a syren's voice—surely that of a mermaid — was gently asking a question. We turned, and found the lady beside us. How had she crossed the deep, deep pool? Had she wings? or was she in truth a mermaid? or was she a spiritualist, and had the spirits wafted her through the air? We were in a lovely and mysterious cave, full of wonders that were almost miracles; magic might well exist here, fairies dwell in those sponges and corallines; a slight sound or murmur as of delicate and distant music filled the air with vibrations, in contrast with the louder murmur of the open sea. But our fair visitant looked so practical and earthly that we could only suppose she had boldly taken the water. We admired and wondered, but she had her reward in the beauty of the cave. We returned and left her apparently romantically spellbound at what she saw. In reality we believed she must be prosaically shivering with wet legs, half paralysed with cold; her rapt reverie nothing but a speculation as to how far we were capable of taking a mean advantage, by waiting on the other side the pool to have our curiosity satisfied and the mystery solved.

We departed religiously, it need not be said, and commenced struggling back to the higher level, though not quite by the way we had come down. Presently the lady—mermaid, spiritualist, something, at any rate, supernatural—issued from the cave without sign of water or ruffled plumage, and also commenced her upward climb, though not varying her route, and therefore not following in our wake. The guide looked after her with evident admiration for her determined courage. "That lady cannot be dhry," he exclaimed at last in his quaint English, and in a tone full of humour; as if he, too, wondering how the feat had been accomplished, had finally rejected all idea of miracle and magic.

Nothing could be more delightful than these scrambles amongst the rocks of Sark. The whole island is guarded by these mighty bulwarks. Day after day our guide disclosed their secret recesses, the hidden caves, the cunning ways by which we might explore the rocks and cliffs. Every now and then we seemed in positive danger, poised upon a point of over-hanging rock, and rescued only by the strong arm of de Carteret, who jumped and climbed from point to point, as sure-footed as a coney, and as swift and safe as a seagull. Whether from above or below, the view was ever magnificent; the sea for ever surrounded us, wild, restless and turbulent.

One of the marvels of Sark is the Creux Terrible. The word is more properly written Derrible; but the former so exactly answers to the description that it is well to adopt it. It was found one day, after long hunting, this time without any guide. We had strolled over the heathery moorland to the edge of the cliffs, wondering where this Creux Terrible could be. At length we gave it up, and then—as so often in life, in graver matters—it came to us. Round by a short path, concealed by a rising bit of land, we discovered the Creux, with so little warning that, unguarded or preoccupied, one might almost fall into the yawning pit.

Imagine a great round hole, reaching from the top of the cliff right down to the shore, about two hundred feet deep and thirty feet



THE COUPEE.

wide. The sides are perpendicular. If you fall over, you will probably touch nothing till you reach the bottom. It was impossible to look into it without shuddering, for its mouth is unprotected, and you must either bend over the tremendous hole, or lie flat upon the ground to look into it. Either process was bad enough, and a very short gaze gratified one's curiosity and love for thrilling emotions. When the tide is high, the sea rushes through two openings into the Creux, and breaks and beats against the sides, and foams and froths like a seething cauldron.

But perhaps the most interesting part of the island is the Coupée, a long, narrow, uneven pathway that joins together Great and Little Sark. The path is now wide enough to allow a cart to pass, but years ago it is said to have been not more than a foot across. On either hand are sandy, rocky cliffs. One side is perpendicular and im-

passable ; the other almost looks so, but with a little courage and perseverance it is possible to get down to the shore. H. never could be brought to attempt it ; a plausible excuse was always at hand : gathering clouds, approaching rain, a violent wind, a rapidly advancing tide. Nevertheless it ought to be done, for in Sark there is nothing finer of its kind than this Coupée Bay, with its little beach, and gigantic rocks.

Once upon a time this downward path was much better than it is now. It must be confessed that it does look somewhat perilous. The first step seems to plant you upon a crumbling wall of perpendicular sand, whence, apparently, there is nothing to prevent you from performing a series of summersaults to the bottom, arriving there in

A Sark Cave.

a state better imagined than described. But it is not so bad as this. Care and courage and a little surefootedness will land you in safety amongst the great pieces of rock that strew the shore, at the very edge of the inflowing tide.

The Coupée leads to Little Sark, which really seems more inhabited and less desolate than the larger portion of the island. En revanche, it is more waste and barren ; a quaint and curious bit of nature, very old-world in appearance, somewhat neglected and poverty-stricken. A handful of houses in irregular rows, forming a small cluster, more melancholy than Sark proper. The houses all looked like fishermen's cottages, purely and simply. The place reminded one rather of a Norwegian settlement, or the island of Marken, in the Zuyder Zee, without its costumes. The people stared curiously, almost as if our visit had been an intrusion, or we

a species unknown. It was all fancy on our part, of course, but even a second visit did not remove the impression. Here the rocks shelved gradually to the shore, but they were rough and slippery. Indeed there was no shore to repay one for the pains of descent, at any rate at high water; but the sea beat upon the rocks, which are singularly rugged and irregular, and in many parts covered with seaweed.

When we came to speak to the people, we found them civil and willing to talk, though shy and primitive. One cottage we entered was the pink of neatness, and proved a greater regard for interior than for mere outward appearance. The inhabitants of Great Sark have more pride; they attend to the one and do not neglect the other.

In that particular cottage a mother was playing with her baby; a comely mother and a cherub of an infant that would have delighted all other mothers' hearts. In an arm-chair in the chimney corner sat the grand-dame, old-looking beyond her years, no doubt, for she might have been a hundred. She had lost her teeth, was wrinkled and hoary, but her eyes were still bright, and there were the remains of what must have been, once upon a time, also a goodly and a comely woman.

Ah, that once upon a time! how one longs sometimes to put back into the past! I know not which is sadder, the Might have been or the Has been. It is, indeed, all sad; life is made up of it; moments of sunshine for days of gloom; hours of rapture and romance hidden away in the secret recesses of the heart, that fortunately tinge with their recollection the after years of reality, and make them endurable; the years when romance is dead, and our early skies, flushed with sunlight and rosy clouds and the deep blue of heaven, have turned to sombre grey, and life's stream is drifting, drifting towards infinitude, the ocean of eternity. And then, oh merciful thought, it will all return; the romance and the youth and the beauty and the love, only this time without sting and without alloy. No thorn to our roses, no pain to our pleasures, no sin to our souls.

Never once during our stay in Sark were we able to accomplish a much-desired end—that of sailing round the island. Only by this means could a true idea of the forms, the height, the grandeur of the cliffs be obtained. To wind in and out of the bays and irregularities, under the very shadow of its rocks, is the only way to gain a true impression of any coast. It then passes before the sight as a moving panorama, and the effect is never forgotten. But day after day the winds blew and the waves beat upon the shore, and ceased not, and we found it impossible to venture upon the water. Time after time we consulted our guide, always with the same result—it could not be done.

One morning we heard that a steamer was coming over unexpectedly from Guernsey. She would return in the afternoon, and no other would visit Sark this year. The weather was so boisterous and

unsettled that it almost seemed as if this opportunity of leaving ought not to be missed. A proposal to let it pass, and take our chance of getting back some fine day as we had come, was cheerfully responded to by H. But at the same time he turned so pale, and looked so melancholy, that he evidently was sacrificing himself on the altar of friendship. His lips told one story, his looks another. It was not to be thought of, and we decided to make use of the occasion.

Impossible would it be to describe the sorrow and reluctance with which I made up my mind to leave Sark. The little island takes strange hold upon the affections: a power deep and lasting. Almost it seemed like bidding a long farewell to a dear, familiar friend, whose face, it may be, we shall look upon no more. Therefore that last day, and each visit to haunts now grown familiar, was coloured with a sadness it never had before. The miller became quite a romantic personage, even the surly cobbler almost a hero.

The steamer came in due course, and sounded only too surely our departing knell. The skies were not very sunny, or the seas smooth, and yet a few excursionists, the last remnant of the Philistines, had ventured over. We had no right to feel, nevertheless we did feel, their presence an intrusion which took from the loneliness of our calm retreats and much-loved solitudes. With those inevitable baskets and their inevitable contents, they put to flight all the romance and individuality which lingers about Sark to so great a degree.

At the post office we found a small crowd collected. It is nothing more than a cottage, primitive and unofficial, and the letters are given out as people come for them. This morning was quite a large mail-day; a whole week's collection, which means, even in a small island, a certain accumulation of letters and papers. The cottage was full, and overflowed, and it was amusing to watch one after another departing, gratified or disappointed, according to results. We had never seen so many people in Sark, never met them in our walks, and it remained a mystery what they did with themselves, and how they passed the time.

It was a greater mystery still, when, that afternoon, we found a yet larger crowd assembled on the little pier. We had said farewell to the island, the comfortable inn, our indefatigable host; had wandered by the windmill, watched the restless sails for the last time, listened to their roar, said a few last words to the friendly miller. Never had the lane leading to the harbour, with its overarching trees, looked so sadly picturesque. Then passing through the tunnel, there was the steamer rocking outside the breakwater, and boats passing to and fro with passengers and cargo.

We watched these preparations for departure with a mournful interest. And still the little crowd increased—and still they came. Surely all the island had turned out to see the departure of the last boat? Down straggled the tourists with empty baskets and limp appearance, as if too much walking and the showers that had fallen

during the day had taken all energy out of their frames, and all the starch out of their attire.

Besides these were many passengers. It was just as if Sark had been asleep during the whole of our sojourn, and now had awakened only in time to get up and depart. In our constant and daily rambles we had seen none of them. And they were not even like the owls who come out at night, for by night we had been as deliciously lonely as by day. Their appearance, too, was amazing. We had found nothing but primitive people; fishermen and quiet working women, who trundled wheelbarrows, and gathered blackberries, and knitted stockings. And behold, here ladies and gentlemen in costumes that might have adorned Piccadilly and not disgraced the reputation of Madame Elise. Conventional handshakes were going on; polite parting regrets; ladylike fears at getting into the small boats, and appeals for protection if there happened to be a gentlemanly response at hand.

Such a string of vehicles, too, one never saw. It was very evident that Sark rouses up only on such occasions, and in the intervals falls into torpid repose. One after another they passed through the tunnel, lumbered over the bridge, and stopped at the end of the breakwater, a procession, singular enough even for out-of-the-world Sark. Gradually everything and everybody found its way on board, the last boat-load was disposed of, the hour had struck, away went the steamer. Sark for us was over. Its grand rocks and cliffs were receding, fading, vanishing. We were tossing and rolling on a rough sea. Some clung to the sides, some disappeared, everyone tried to look happy and comfortable, and very few succeeded.

One at least on board the little steamer was departing in silence and sorrow. More than ever did Sark, now an experience of the past, rise up in the memory and in the heart as a spot full of quiet beauty and untold attractions; round which a glorious sea for ever surges, chanting its praises in mighty tones, guarding it, sometimes only too well, from fear of evil. You may listen for ever to the beating of the waves upon the shore; you may watch them break and foam around those glorious cliffs and rocks, that possess a majesty and a power only equalled by the sea itself. You may lie prone upon the heathery slopes, and let the bracing air fan your cheeks with a life-giving caress; you may bask in the glowing sunshine, and watch the white clouds passing over the face of the deep blue sky. Hour after hour no human being will intrude upon your solitude or disturb your dreams. All is peace, loveliness and repose; perfect, inexpressible contentment. For Sark, by its charm, has steeped you in the waters of Lethe, and the spell is broken only by departure.

And we, in the little steamer, are tossing in the midst of the sea, our dream ended, bound once more for Guernsey.

A PURSE OF GOLD.

"IS it all right, Miss Waterware?"

"Quite, thank you—thank you very much," replied Rhoda, counting the little pile of golden sovereigns, and placing them with trembling fingers in an old purse, empty before, which she returned to the depths of her pocket.

"In six weeks' time, then, Miss Waterware—five weeks from next Monday."

"Oh, yes, I shall not forget; I shall be sure to be punctual," said Rhoda, looking at the principal with a bright smile. "I am *very* much obliged to you, Mrs. Bent."

Mrs. Bent smiled back again. She liked this young teacher of hers much; she liked the fair, pretty face, the pleasing manners, always gentle and ladylike, the cheerful, patient temper. "I hope you will be able to take a little holiday yourself, my dear," she said. "You should go somewhere for a change, if only for a week or two."

"I should like to, very much. I don't know what papa and mamma will say: but, with all this money, I think we can go somewhere," added the girl. "Good-bye, dear madam; I hope you will enjoy your stay at the sea-side;—and I thank you once again."

She set off with the brisk step of elation towards her home, a roomy, old-fashioned farm-house on the outskirts of the little village, which was called Setley. She was only an out-door governess in Mrs. Bent's school, and she took this same walk morning and night.

Captain Waterware was very poor. Close upon his retirement from the army, when he was looking out all ways to see what he could find to do, to eke out his narrow income and bring up his flock of children, this small farm fell to him by the death of an uncle. He took up his abode in it, and turned farmer.

It was but genteel poverty, at the best. With all his exertions and his industry—and Captain Waterware did not disdain to work as hard as any of his men—he could not, somehow, make it "pay." His eldest son, John, a tall, well-grown, handsome young fellow of one-and-twenty, was on the farm also, hoping for better things some day; and, twelve months before this present time, Rhoda, then eighteen, had presented herself to Mrs. Bent, hearing that lady wanted a teacher. Tired of the straitened means at home, the want of ready money for pretty new hats and neck-ribbons, and also conscientiously wishing to do something towards her own support, Rhoda applied for the situation without consulting anybody. What Mrs. Bent wanted was a sort of general help to herself—to go in by day: to hear lessons, set plain work and teach it, grind the

multiplication-table into dunces, sometimes give the music lessons, to be altogether a Jack-of-all-trades. The pupils were young and few in number. Rhoda accepted the situation; she was to be there in time for breakfast every morning, and to return home at eight in the evening. The amount of salary she was not quite clear about; but thought Mrs. Bent had mentioned ten pounds, to be paid yearly, before the Midsummer holidays. And when, on this day we are writing of, Mrs. Bent put into her hands *twenty* pounds, it seemed to the girl like a shower of gold.

Her feet seemed hardly to touch the grass, for she took the field way this warm afternoon. "Twenty pounds!" she repeated to herself in excitement; "I wonder what I can spend it in? What a lot of things it will buy for all of us!"

She forgot how *hardly* she had earned it; all things looked couleur de rose. She thought not of the weary toiling and teaching, or of the cold walks in the dark mornings and the darker nights, when the snow lay on the ground, and the sharp wind buffeted her, and the bitter frost struck her face. That was winter; this was summer—in more senses than one. It is well that the one should replace the other.

Her straw hat taken off and hanging on her arm, Rhoda passed gleefully on, leaving the cares of this wicked world behind her. A nearly six weeks' holiday, and twenty pounds to spend in it!

She seemed to tread on roses. Roses were in her cheeks, rosy were her lips, and she stopped a moment to pluck a cluster of wild roses from the hedge to toy with. Pink and white flowers nestled at her feet, starry ferns lay ready to her hand, green leaves rustled in the summer breeze. Drooping elm trees and shading oaks held their arms above her; blue forget-me-nots peeped out at her as she passed; and the yellow light of the afternoon sun glinted through the foliage to gild her pale brown hair.

"How sweet everything is!" she cried, dancing along. And who, to see her, would have supposed her to be Mrs. Bent's staid teacher, that sat in church with the little girls to keep order on a Sunday? "And I have a lover, and he loves me dearly," she softly whispered to her own heart. "And I wonder what he will say to all this money? Twenty pounds to do what I choose with! Twenty golden sovereigns! All my own—mine! I could throw them in the fire if I liked; I could change them into notes, and make spills to light papa's pipe with." And what a glad laugh she gave!

"Go out for a holiday, said dear Mrs. Bent to me; and how good she is, when I have often thought her stern and cross! Ah, if I could take one! The world is before me where to choose and go—if only I *could* choose and go—as other girls go whose people are richer than we are! I can wear my best frock every day now if I like, and buy new ones; I could buy new hats for Dolly and Kate; I could buy a new silk for mamma; I could go off to some charming

watering-place, and mix with all the fashionable people. Oh, what could one not do with twenty pounds! I will consult with mamma; I'll ask Dolly."

The clock was striking five when she reached home, and they were going to tea. Rhoda poured out the gold on the table. Her brothers and sisters flocked around with eager faces, not presuming to touch, Rhoda's the most eagerly excited face of all. She had never seen so much gold in one heap in all her life, still less possessed it.

"What can I do with it all, mamma?"

"Put it in the bank," interposed Captain Waterware. "I will place it there, Rhoda, in your name; it will be a pretty little nest-egg for you."

Rhoda's face fell. "Oh, papa!"

"That would not be enjoying it," smiled Mrs. Waterware, a plain, quiet, patient woman. "I expect Rhoda wants to experience the felicity of spending it."

"I have worked so hard for it," pleaded poor Rhoda.

"Suppose you buy a new carpet for the best parlour, Rhoda; the old one *is* so shabby," suggested little Kate. "A beautiful green ground, with roses and lilies on it."

"And a blue-and-red border round it," added John, quite gravely.

"O, yes!" said Kate, taking it in; "and, John, she might buy you a new gold watch and chain. You called your old silver one a turnip, yesterday, you know!"

"Buy a new croquet-set, Rhoda," cried one of the little boys. "Is it all *real* gold?" bending closer to the glittering heap.

"Couldn't you buy me a writing-desk, Rhoda?" whispered Dolly.

"Couldn't you buy us the sun, moon, and stars, Rhoda?" asked steady Stephen, who was hoping to get to college some time, and thence into the Church.

"Be quiet, you children," said Captain Waterware. "As Rhoda says, she has worked hard for the money, and it shall be spent upon herself—if it is spent at all."

The mother nodded approvingly. "To begin with, my dear, you must have a new silk dress. It had better be black: that does for all occasions."

"I do want one rather badly," admitted Rhoda.

"You want other things badly also, child. Suppose you put down a list?"

Rhoda was about to act on Mrs. Waterware's suggestion there and then. She put her hand in her pocket for her pencil, and drew out a small paper parcel.

"Oh, how ungrateful I am! I forgot all about it!" she cried. "Look here! The girls gave it me to-day."

It was but a little matter. A pretty pocket pincushion that the

school girls had made for her. On one side of the cardboard was a really well-painted little landscape; on the other, the words, "To our dear teacher, Miss Rhoda Waterware." The narrow, blue-ribboned rim between was stuck full of pins.

"Was it not kind of them?" said Rhoda, who had a loving, grateful nature.

Upstairs in her room that night, Dolly already in bed and asleep, she sat down to make out the list of the new things she needed. In truth it was rather an extensive one.

"Let me see," began Rhoda, drawing the candle towards her; and there she paused, and bit at the top of her lead pencil—the stump of a pencil that she used in the school.

"A black silk dress," she wrote at the head of the page. "And a new hat—I *must* have that. I *want* a new bonnet for Sundays, but ——"

The pencil needed sharpening. She drew out her little pearl-handled knife, and it made her think of the giver.

"I wonder why Hugh gave me this?" she thought. "I told him at the time it was not lucky—that tradition says when we give a knife to any friend it cuts love in two. Hugh laughed in that quiet manner of his, and said he would risk it as far as *his* love went, and he trusted he could as regarded mine. Heigho!—if Hugh were but rich!—or if ——" Rhoda paused.

"I don't think I'll make out the list to-night. I want so many things—and what pleasure will the things give me, only that they are needed—when I am not going out in the world to show them?"

"It looks almost like a special interposition of Providence, Sophia," said Miss Betsy Oatridge (her cousin) to Mrs. Waterware, "that I came over to see you, before starting on my journey. It will be the very thing for Rhoda, and I'll take her with me."

"But your sister may not care to see her, Betsy?" debated Mrs. Waterware. "She may have her house full; the Landors keep a great deal of company, and Rhoda has never been invited there."

"Fiddlesticks!" retorted Miss Betsy. "*I* invite her; that's quite enough. I should like to see my sister Susan not making room for anybody *I* choose to bring. This is Friday. I did think of starting on Monday morning next, but I'll put it off till Thursday, which will give Rhoda time for her preparations. She must go properly rigged-out *there*, you know."

"I'm afraid of the expense," sighed Mrs. Waterware.

"Afraid of the expense!" echoed strong-minded Miss Betsy. "What do you mean by that, Sophia? Has not the girl earned twenty pounds by dint of labour? And would you grudge her the benefit of it!"

"A few new things she must inevitably have if she stays at home; but, to make a proper appearance for some weeks' visit, at such a

house as Mrs. Landor's, would take the whole of it; and I do not think we should be justified in allowing it all to be spent!"

"You grub on here, in this old farm-house, among your boys and girls, Sophia, until you lose common sense," retorted Miss Betsy. "The girl was born to better things than she encounters now, and she ought to have a chance of finding them."

"But ——"

"Do hear me. You can't spend her money better than in fitting her out, so far as it will go, as the daughter of the once-fashionable Captain Waterware. I will pay her journey to and fro, and supply her with pocket-money. I can't do more than that."

"You are very good, Betsy ——"

"Not at all," interrupted Miss Betsy. "I shall be repaid in her companionship. Who knows what may come of this chance, Sophia? A pretty girl, and in good society. She may bring home a husband, for all you know!"

"But she is engaged, Betsy."

"Who is engaged?"

"Rhoda."

"*Engaged*—at nineteen! Did you engage her in her cradle?" angrily went on Miss Betsy. "Who is she engaged to?"

"To Hugh Gervase."

"What! the village doctor?—that dark little shrimp of a man!" screamed Miss Betsy.

"The little dark man is the uncle, Dr. Gervase. Hugh is with him—only an assistant at present. He is a very fine, nice-looking, sensible young man."

Miss Betsy Oatridge turned up her magnificent nose. "A village doctor's assistant, indeed! Just like you, Sophia! But I don't suppose you need trouble yourselves much more about *him*. Let the girl go out a bit into the world."

And poor, meek Mrs. Waterware, ever accustomed to yield to self-asserting Miss Betsy, had not the courage to do anything else now. Captain Waterware rather approved of the plan. Not so Rhoda.

"*All* the money to be spent upon me!—none upon anybody else, not even mamma or Dolly!" she remonstrated. "I should not like that at all, Aunt Betsy."

Aunt Betsy threw back her bonnet-strings: she had been talking too much to spare time to take it off. "Do you know your church-catechism, Rhoda?"

"I ought to," said Rhoda. "I have to hear every girl in the school say it once a week."

"Then you'll be good enough to call to mind, miss, that young people are there enjoined to obey their pastors and masters. And now hold your tongue."

Carrying all before her by dint of her strong will, Miss Betsy, that self-same day, carried off Rhoda.

"Give me the twenty pounds, and I'll lay it out upon her as far as it will go," she said to them. "I know what's what better than you do now, and what things she'll most want."

Hugh Gervase only caught a glimpse of her as she was getting into Miss Betsy's hired fly in the afternoon, to be conveyed to the railway station three miles off. He was passing accidentally.

"You'll not forget me, Rhoda," he whispered, when Miss Betsy, in answer to his questions, informed him in a cold, stand-off manner, that she was taking her young relative home to prepare her for a fashionable visit of some weeks. And the fly drove off, leaving the young doctor spell-bound.

II.

Time and tide wait for no man. And though the black silk dress took some time to choose and make, and other essentials took time to choose and make, by dint of Miss Betsy's energetic endeavours and enjoinders, all things were completed by the Thursday morning.

While the dew was still on the grass, while the birds were holding their matin songs, while the sweet flowers were opening their petals to the coming day, they set off to catch an early train. Miss Betsy liked to be in good time for everything. Rhoda was happy as the singing birds, and building up air-castles.

It was a long journey. Not until the afternoon did they reach Arkleigh, the place where the Landors lived. Miss Betsy was pushing about amid the crowd at the station, and Rhoda stood on the platform a little bewildered, when she was suddenly accosted in a most astounding manner. "My dear Caroline, *you* here!" exclaimed a young man; and bending close down, kissed her on both cheeks.

Shrinking back, too much startled to speak, and glancing up to see whether the assailant might be a madman escaped from his keepers, she saw a tall, strong, gentlemanly young fellow, with a plain and merry countenance that was just then laughing all over.

"I beg your pardon a thousand times," said he. "I thought it was my sister Caroline, I did, indeed—we *are* expecting her to-day."

But here he found his ribs nearly stove in by the furious assaults of Miss Betsy's parasol.

"You thought nothing of the kind, James Landor," she exclaimed; "you know you didn't. It was just one of your impudent tricks. —— Rhoda, my dear, this is the eldest son; and a nice respectable eldest son he is showing himself to be!"

"Don't give me a worse character than I deserve, Aunt Betsy," was the laughing answer. "It was indeed an inadvertent mistake—this platform's dark—and I hope Miss Waterware will forgive me—for this, I conclude, is she. My mother sent me here to meet you and the young lady, aunt, and the carriage is outside."

"Then we'll go on in it. And you just see after the luggage,

James Landor, and bring it home in a fly. Five boxes and three hand parcels, all plainly directed in my name."

That was how Rhoda's visit was inaugurated. She soon *forgave* James. *He* was a good-hearted, merry-natured, happy young fellow of one-and-twenty. Distant cousins by kin, they became intimate as brother and sister. The Landors were gay, happy people; they lived in good style, and saw much company. Rhoda had never before been so happy, so free from care.

Miss Betsy Oatridge, too strong-minded to be reticent, told her sister the story of the twenty pounds, and how it had been spent in decorating Rhoda for the visit. James, who was present and heard the account, laughed immoderately—especially at his aunt's winding up her narrative by saying Rhoda had looked upon herself as an heiress after that pile of gold was put into her hands.

"Miss Waterware the heiress!" commented he. "We'll introduce you here by that title, Rhoda, and have some fun. Mind you don't spoil sport by denying it; and please mind *you* don't, Aunt Betsy."

They paid no attention to his joking words, none at all, forgot all about it, in fact. Yet, strange to say, in some inexplicable way, the news did get about Arkleigh that Miss Waterware was a great heiress.

She and her friends were unconscious of this: people did not call her "heiress" to her face.

"Have you seen the new heiress?" was the question asked all over Arkleigh—at the breakfast-table, at luncheon-parties, at afternoon teas, at croquet meetings; above all, at the men's clubs. "Who is she when she's at home? How much is she worth? Some remote cousin of the Landors, is she not?"

"Came here under the wing of a queer old party, one Betsy Oatridge. *She's* well off, they say; but she's a regular guy, and wears spectacles."

"But what is the amount of the heiress's fortune?"

"Don't know. Fifty thousand, somebody said. Been living in seclusion with an old father, one Captain Waterware—retired."

"Money all her own?"

"Believe so. A nice little pull for some lucky fellow, fifty thousand pounds!"

And when Mr. James Landor could be caught at the club, and slyly questioned he protested, as well as he could for laughing, that he didn't know the precise amount of the heiress's wealth: Miss Betsy, a close old girl, would not tell him anything about it.

All the idle and fashionable young men went running to the Landors'. Mrs. Landor innocently wondered why they had become so attentive all on a sudden; Miss Betsy, priding herself as usual on her common sense, told herself why without the trouble of guessing: they were all taken with Rhoda's fresh and charming face. And she

looked upon it that the girl was as good as married to one of these rich and desirable men.

Perhaps all of them were not so rich (or so desirable either) as they appeared on the surface. Miss Betsy's eyes were but inexperienced eyes, after all, counting the spectacles in, and she was single-minded enough, as the world goes.

The two swains most persistent in their admiration, and who indeed soon distanced others, were men of the world, plausible in manner, stylish in appearance. Captain Wynne was the son of old Colonel Wynne, and supposed to be very well off. Mr. Lacy had come into a good fortune when he was of age. He was thirty now, and the money was all run through. Captain Wynne never had much to run through, and never would have, if the truth were known. To both of these gentlemen it seemed that a pretty girl and fifty thousand pounds would transform them into celestial mortals, more blessed than gods.

They quite dodged one another. If Mr. Lacy made his appearance at Mrs. Landor's in the morning, in all the pomp and circumstance of affluent state—a thoroughbred horse, and a groom behind on another, to hold the thoroughbred while its master went in—Captain Wynne would be sure to come in the afternoon. Rhoda was regularly besieged; and not at all loth to be. The glamour of the new life was upon her. It was just like a novel to have hothouse flowers sent to her—sent to *her!* She revelled in her pretty new dresses: she lavishly put on expensive gloves. Life to her, just now, was a pleasant day-dream. How delightful it was to be young and happy and beloved! As to her two lovers, as James persisted in calling them, she could not decide which of the two she preferred. Mr. Lacy was the most intellectual; Rupert Wynne the gayest.

The one, Lacy, sang with her in Italian, and quoted French poetry so rapidly as to confuse her: she could not always distinguish one word from another. "He means it to be complimentary, I'm sure," thought Rhoda; "but, if it were not for his eyes, I could not tell whether he is abusing me or praising me." While Captain Wynne walked by her side in the garden, plucking the sweetest flowers to offer her, and telling the ordinary news of the place in the tenderest of voices.

Strange to say, these two lovers were good friends. That is, they played cards together, and rode and drank in company. They had been introduced to the young lady at the same time; and they were content to try for her openly, each taking honestly his own chance of success—only asking "a fair field and no favour."

Thus three weeks of Aunt Betsy's visit passed away, and the fourth was entered upon. In this last week a picnic was projected to some mountains that lay at a distance, and a large party organised for it. The morning rose all lovely, and the party, after an early breakfast, began to assemble at Mrs. Landor's.

The night before, Rhoda's two lovers had been sitting together at their club, over cigars and claret-cup, both of them unusually silent. Suddenly Mr. Lacy got up, threw away the stump of his cigar, and addressed his friend in these enigmatical words :

"Wynne, my boy, fair play has been the word with us, and we have both honourably kept to it. But I'm thinking that must change."

"As how, Lacy ?"

"Time's getting on, and nothing is done : you are none the better, neither am I. We must push on faster. It's said she goes away next week."

"Each one of us set on, and do what he can to distance the other —eh ? Is that to be it, Lacy ?"

"I don't see what else is to be done. We have made the running for her, side by side, in open fairness ; that can't go on for ever. So now for

> "'The good old rule, the simple plan—
> That he shall take who has the power,
> And he shall keep who can !'"

Captain Wynne considered for a minute, and then gave an approving nod. He was agreeable.

"Candidly, Wynne, I can't afford to let the thing go on," answered Lacy ; "I am too hard-up. And I tell you fairly, that I shall put my luck with her to the test to-morrow."

"All right, Lacy. I'll do the same on my own account. There's my hand on it, old friend ; and the little heiress must either pay your debts or mine. Confound all debts, say I. Any way, whether she chooses you, or whether she chooses me, we shan't quarrel. She's a dear little girl, and I shall be sorry to lose her—if I do lose her. But the next best thing to her having me, will be her having you, Lacy."

The morning sun shone in the blue sky, and the party assembled at Mrs. Landor's. All sorts of vehicles were in waiting : landaus, waggonettes, gigs. Captain Wynne and Mr. Lacy each dashed up in a stylish gig, each hoping for a certain young lady's company in it. But James Landor had a gig of his own, and had appropriated her.

"You will go with me, mind !" he said to Rhoda, with all the authority that he might have used had he been her brother.

"May I ?" said the young lady, appealing to Mrs. Landor.

"Why, of course you may, my dear," was the answer ; "you and James are cousins, you know ; it will be quite en règle."

They drove off together. The scenery through which they had to pass was charming. Rhoda's heart beat high with happiness. It was worth all the school drudgery she had toiled through for twelve months to be enjoying life in this way. Well dressed, no care for the hour, driving in these enchanting, dim old roads, with this ever-

pleasant, ever-amusing cousin, who made so much of her. They had struck into a wild sort of place; the road wound in and out, round dark cliffs that towered aloft. Old pines darkened the air with their gloomy presence; brighter foliage reared its verdant masses. Old fallen trees, hoary and grim, shaggy with pendant mosses, lay about. A wild, gloomy bit of scenery altogether, but possessing its attractions. If a thought ever and anon crossed Rhoda's heart, that one whom she had learned to care for was not with her to enjoy things, why, she had compensations. By the side of these fashionable men, grand and rich and idle, who would look at a plain, hard-working village doctor?

"Here we are," cried James, driving steadily over a little rustic bridge into a wide, green, open space, that might be the abode of fairyland. Some of the party were there already, having taken the other road; more were coming up.

Everybody knows what a picnic is, with its unstilted intercourse, and its luncheon baskets. Not always a spot so appropriate as this is accessible for one. A mountain scramble is a delightful pastime when the atmosphere is clear, the sun shines on the joyous youths and maidens, and the air rings with their fresh young voices.

The first thing done was to spread the lunch al fresco. A cottage hard by, accustomed to these parties, supplied hot water, plates, knives and forks. All went merry as a marriage bell; and when the meal was over, its guests dispersed hither and thither at their own sweet will. Miss Betsy Oatridge, and a few more staid ones of her age and tastes, sat on chairs, borrowed from the cottage, in the shade. Miss Betsy wore a huge hat which flapped about on all sides; James Landor asked her, in the hearing of all the company, whether it had come out of Noah's Ark.

Oh, the monster rocks, that one might have fancied grim sentinels, guarding the entrances to the strongholds of giants! Oh, the picturesque glades; the purple blue-bells, the trailing arbutus, the fragrant wild thyme, the patches of blue forget-me-nots! With her hands full of these little flowers, Rhoda, scrambling up hill alone, stood a moment, with panting breath and sparkling eyes, to gaze at the grand panorama beginning to unroll itself to her view. A vast plain, like a wide ocean, lay spread out before her as a picture, its surface delicately showing alternately light grassy plains and dark woodlands, threaded with silver streamlets, and dotted with villages and farm-houses. Beyond, clustered hills, touching the verge of the horizon: you could not tell which were the mountain summits, which the light clouds. Rhoda, contemplating all this, lost in rapture, was speedily brought down from the clouds to earth by a voice beneath her.

"Oh, Miss Waterware! won't you wait for me? I am coming when I can find the proper turn. Dear, dear Rhoda, will you not tell me that there's hope for me? If you care for me in the least degree, throw me down one of those sweet blue flowers."

How Rhoda had attained her present vantage-ground—a small grassy shelf, quite out of the direct way—she would have been puzzled to tell. She looked more than pretty standing there, in her delicate summer costume, the white straw hat shading her pretty face and its clear, innocent hazel eyes. Captain Wynne's ascending voice, and his petition, brought to the face a rose-red flush.

Voices and footsteps were heard rapidly approaching; some of the party had found the same way that she had, at any rate. Was it by accident, as she turned to look, that a small bunch of the blue forget-me-nots fell from her hand at Rupert Wynne's feet? As he returned her a sunny, grateful look, and raised them to his lips, the blush on her face deepened to a glowing crimson.

Of those approaching, Mr. Lacy reached her first. He bounded over a ledge of rock, and took his stand at her side. Rupert Wynne threw up to him a gay look of triumph.

"Excelsior is still our motto, Miss Waterware," cried Mr. Lacy:—

"'——Non sotto l'ombra in piaggia molle
Tra fonti e fior, tra Ninfe e tra Sirene,
Ma in cima all'erto e faticoso colle
Della virtù, reposto e il nostro bene.'"

What was there for Rhoda to do but blush again, and smile confusedly, for she did not understand a word of it.

"I thought I heard people with you," she said, as the steps and voices seemed to be dying away.

"They have gone up higher, I expect; I caught a glimpse of you here, and found my way. And I want you to go higher also," he added. "On the side of that steep crag yonder is a seat with a story—a real legendary tradition. Will you come?"

"But how is it possible to reach that overhanging crag?"

"It is easily accessible—taking the right way. Allow me to pilot you. You must give me your hand, Miss Waterware."

Seeing nothing else for it, she gave him her hand, and he struck into a narrow path that wound upwards.

"These mountain scrambles are generally like that celebrated feat of King George's," remarked Rhoda, "who marched up-hill with twice ten thousand men, and then marched down again."

On reaching the summit of that particular crag, Rhoda, hot, tired, and glad to have got safely up, willingly took the comfortable-looking seat, sculptured by nature on the edge of one side of it. It was called, Mr. Lacy told her, the Giant's Throne, and there was exactly room for two mortals to sit on it, as he observed, squeezing himself in beside her. Then he told her the legend, which, of course, had to do with two lovers, who sat there to plight their troth, ending with the words, "And they lived happy ever after."

"It is a pretty story," she said, uncomfortably conscious.

"But you have not yet heard the superstition connected with it.

It is that all lovers since that time, who plight their troth sitting in this self-same spot, are sure to lead lives of perfect felicity. Oh, Rhoda, dear Rhoda," he broke off in tones of passion, "will you not plight yours to me? I love you dearly. Nay, do not turn your head away. Give me the right to claim this dear little hand. Say one word, only one—that you will be mine."

Rhoda Waterware had never been in such a dilemma as this. There was Captain Wynne, and there was Hugh Gervase, and now here was Mr. Lacy! What on earth to answer, she could not think. But a sudden shouting arose to interrupt the confusion.

"Halloa! Take care, you two, there!" called out James Landor from below. "Rhoda, my dear, do you know that one false step, but a slight slip, would land you in Eternity? Don't *you* know the place, Lacy? That ledge of a seat overhangs a fearful precipice; it is concealed from your view by the thick growth of ivy. Bring her away, for heaven's sake!"

Startled to terror, Rhoda bent forward. She could see nothing—nothing, save the rocky earth at a vast depth below. Her head began to swim.

"Oh, Mr. Lacy, this is fearful," she cried, putting her hand unbidden into his. "Take me away; take me away! My head turns already."

"Say yes, first," he whispered in a low, entreating tone, clasping the hand within his own warmly. "Say you will accept me."

"Yes, oh, yes! I will say anything to be got away from this horrible spot," she answered, nearly beside herself with fright. "Is this the way? Oh, come! come!"

Cautiously and carefully he led her away, and beyond the reach of peril. Poor Rhoda, thoroughly unnerved, could hardly restrain her tears.

"How could you lead me into such danger, Mr. Lacy?"

"Landor and your own fears have given you an exaggerated view of it. There is no danger when ordinary caution is observed, and you were in none while I was at hand to guard you. Rhoda! you cannot suppose I would suffer you to encounter any?"

"It has given me a great fright," she said, with a half sob.

"Thanks to Landor. My love, you must forgive me. I wanted to hear you say the dear words there that you have said."

"But I—but you—you know, Mr. Lacy, I did not mean ——"

"I know what you said, my darling," he rejoined, interrupting her stammering excuse; "you cannot break a promise given on the Giant's Throne. Such a thing, even with the best wish, was never ventured on yet."

James Landor came in view, and stopped the confidences. The scramble down was even more fatiguing than the ascent had been. And when they came to another little natural plateau, abounding in mossy seats of rock, and just over a tiny streamlet that made the

echoes musical with the sound of falling waters, Rhoda at least was glad to rest. Here James Landor pitched into Lacy for his imprudence as hard as tongue could do it. Captain Wynne, who had come up, reproached his friend with silent looks, and a bevy of damsels screamed out that they'd not be taken to the Giant's Throne for all the diamonds ever polished.

Tea came next, in the fairy-land where they had dined; a pleasant tea, all nectar and ambrosia—or things that tasted as good. Sitting on the borders of a gurgling stream afterwards, many of them right glad of the rest, someone sang a song taken from Tennyson's "Brook," and the words were the fitting accompaniment to the delicious gurgling of the water:—

"I clatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays;
I babble on the pebbles.

"I steal by lawns, and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the blue forget-me-nots,
That bloom for happy lovers."

Captain Wynne looked at the withered flowers in his button-hole. Mr. Lacy looked proudly conscious at Rhoda. And Rhoda, blushing painfully, moved away from the spot. She wandered to a sheltered nook, where she fancied herself secure from interruption, and there sat down on the grass in a reflection that was very uncomfortable.

What could she do, she wondered. Here were the *two*. Two lovers! Which of them should she take? And if she took either, what of Mr. Gervase? "I wish I was a nun!" sighed Rhoda. "Nuns never run the risk of such troubles as these.—If I don't believe they are coming after me! They have found me out here. Yes, *both* of them!" She jumped up.

True enough: Captain Wynne and Mr. Lacy. But two of the girls were with them, which to Rhoda was a relief.

"Do see what I've just done!" cried one of the girls, piteously, to Rhoda, exhibiting a woeful rent in the skirt of her thin dress.

"It must be pinned up," said Rhoda.

"But we've not got any pins; neither of us has."

"I have; I'll do it for you," returned Rhoda, ever good-natured. And she dived into an inner pocket and produced a pincushion. It was the pincushion presented to her by the little school-girls, with the painted view on one side it, the inscription on the other.

Letting the pincushion fall on the ground, after taking some pins from it, she knelt down and busied her hands with the torn skirt. The other girl stood watching. Mr. Lacy, having nothing better to do, cast his eyes on the inscription in an idle, indifferent sort of way,

and read it to himself. Then, bending his head lower, as if to make sure he was not mistaken, he read it again.

With a breathless gasp, suppressed instantly, he quietly touched Captain Wynne's arm, pointing stealthily to the inscription. The latter then read it, and they looked at one another. At that moment James Landor ran up.

"Some more pins, please," said Rhoda to the young lady who was looking on. She stooped to pick up the pincushion, and handed out the pins needed, one by one.

It was her turn now to see the inscription; and she, not thinking any ill, repeated it aloud. "'To our dear teacher, Miss Rhoda Waterware.' That does not mean *you*, does it?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, it does," replied Rhoda, rising to regard the dress.

"But—surely you are not a governess?"

"Yes, I am."

"And not an heiress?"

"An heiress! I! Oh, dear, no!"

A dead silence. Rhoda saw the blank looks surrounding her, the consternation depicted on the faces of her two lovers, and she blushed painfully. But she was a right-minded girl, morally brave.

"We are a good many of us at home—children, I mean; and papa's income is very limited. It seemed to me that I, the eldest girl, ought to do something to help, if only for pocket-money; and for a year now I have gone by day to help Mrs. Bent in her school."

Still nobody spoke; the silence was not reassuring. Mr. James Landor disappeared round a projecting corner, and had to sway himself about to keep from bursting.

"Well, and it is very meritorious of you, Miss Waterware. I wish all of us whose families are poor had the courage to do the same!" spoke up the girl of the damaged skirt, as she heartily put her hand into Rhoda's. They turned away together; the other young lady followed. Young Landor emerged into view, rather purple: the two lovers received him with reproachful glances.

"How, in the name of mischief, could the report have arisen that she was a great heiress?" cried Lacy. "*You* must have heard it said, Landor, times and again. You ought to have contradicted it."

"*I!*" returned James, innocently. "My good fellow, you must have seen me laugh at it, often; it was just one of those absurd little reports that one makes fun of. If I took upon myself to contradict all the tattle that's afloat, I should have my hands full."

"Took us all completely in," observed Wynne, ruefully.

"A teacher in a school!—why, she's not even a lady!" foamed Lacy, in his desperate rage.

James Landor turned upon him. "A lady always; a gentlewoman of good birth and breeding, though she does teach. Captain Waterware can hold rank with you any day, my friend. Don't libel people, Lacy!"

Mr. Lacy drove Captain Wynne home in his gig, lending his own

gig to somebody else. Neither of them pressed for Miss Waterware's companionship on the road, as they had in the morning; and both got up a nice little plausible excuse to Mrs. Landor for not joining the rest of the company at her house that evening.

Rhoda returned home with James, as in coming. He guided his horse so strangely through losing himself in bursts of laughter that she threatened to get out of the gig.

"Those two fine fellows have been taking you for an heiress all the time, you see, Rhoda!"

"But *why* have they? And they seem quite to have turned against me now. How could such a report have got about?"

"Who is to know how improper reports get about," replied Mr. James, piously. "You won't be troubled by the two gentlemen much more, I fancy."

"You think they only cared to please me for my ideal money?"

"That's it, young lady. They'll both run away from you now, as the recreant knight did from the lady looking over the castle wall."

Rhoda fell to thinking. "James," she said, presently, in a half whisper, "it seems to me it has been but sorry pastime. Why did they try to make me like *them*, if they did not care for me?"

"They liked your reputed money, my dear."

"And—suppose—suppose they had made me care for them (for one of them, I mean, of course), with all my heart? A nice plight of sorrow I might be in now!"

"There was no fear of that, you know. Your heart was case-hardened."

"Case-hardened! How?"

"By your love for Gervase; your engagement to him."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rhoda, with hot cheeks, "who told you of that?"

"Aunt Betsy. It was her first private news to us when she entered the house. So I knew you were safe, cousin mine."

"Do you think it can be that those two gentlemen *want* money, James, that they should think so much of my being an heiress?"

"I think they both want it very badly."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Rhoda. "When they both make such an appearance—seem to be so rich and high and mighty!"

Mrs. Landor was somewhat surprised the following morning to receive a note from Captain Wynne *and* one from Mr. Lacy. Some friend of theirs had met with a dreadful accident, a hundred miles, or so, away; he was lying in imminent danger, and they were hastening to him. Hence they were unable to call on Mrs. Landor, apologised, and enclosed cards.

A few days more, and Miss Betsy Oatridge was sitting in the homeward train, Rhoda by her side. Rhoda was thoughtful, Miss Betsy cross.

"The four weeks have passed like a dream," reflected the girl,

"and all my money's gone. My whole twelvemonth's earnings! It might have been better to buy the new carpet; or to let papa put it in the bank; or else spend it on mamma and Dolly. The dear boys asked me for a new cricket ——"

"Well, it has been a nice failure!"

Miss Betsy's sharp-toned interruption startled Rhoda. "What has been a failure?" she asked.

"What! why the visit," said Aunt Betsy. "I intended it to have made your fortune. And why one of those two men did not propose to you, I cannot think; or both of them, for the matter of that."

"It has been a very nice visit, Aunt Betsy. Quite a new experience for me. I shall be all the better and brighter for it."

"It must have been your own fault in discouraging them; nothing else," grumbled Aunt Betsy. "You had got Hugh Gervase on your brain when you went, and I expect he's there still. I wish you joy of your school duties, Rhoda, and of him too."

Rhoda turned away her face and smiled softly. By the thrill of joy that ran through her at the sound of his name, at the thought that she was so soon to see him again, she knew that she had him indeed on her brain, and in her heart. The fairy glamour of fiction and fancy was over; truth and reality reigned again.

It was late that night when they reached Captain Waterware's In the bustle of getting the luggage from the fly, all the Waterwares young and old, assisting, Hugh Gervase drew Rhoda aside for a moment under the star-lit laurels.

"Have you returned as you went, Rhoda—all mine?" he whispered.

"All yours, Hugh. Now and always."

"My darling! Well, I have news for you. My uncle has at last taken me into partnership. And so—and so—you know the rest."

She burst into tears. Of joy, not of pain. What sort of dismay would have been hers now had she been tempted to give up Hugh for either of those others?

"It is that I am glad to be back with you again," she said: and Hugh kissed the tears away.

"Rhoda!" screamed out Miss Betsy. "Rhoda! Now, where's that girl gone to? Rhoda, my best calf-leather bag is lost. You must have left it in the train."

"Here's the bag, Aunt Betsy," said Rhoda, coming forward, and holding out the bag in her hand.

JACOB'S CURSE.

THE new Rath of Gottingen sat in his leathern chair close to the stove. On a rude table at his elbow were assembled the little appliances necessary to his comfort, on the evening of this his first day of office—a huge jug of beer and an ample tobacco pouch. He wore an easy velvet coat, somewhat shabby, loose slippers covered with roses in carpet stitch, the work of some good Bertha or Matilda. A smoking-cap with a long tassel, hung down over a thoughtful, contemplative face—a face that should have belonged to a studious professor, rather than to a man whose calling led him into the busy walks of life.

Rath Marquardsen was a young man, little over thirty: his talent had raised him thus early to the honourable position he held in Gottingen. It seemed to him but yesterday that he was a student in the venerable university, taking notes of the lawyer's lectures in the great saal of the college, or strolling the streets arm in arm with his chosen comrade, the captain of the Prussian corps, their white and green caps stuck jauntily on their heads, and their great dogs following closely. The streets were as full of Prussians, red-capped Vandals, and yellow-crested Swabians as ever; they sang the old drinking-songs in their rich voices, bass and baritone and mellow tenor so sweet, that the Rath was fain to pause for a second in his administration of justice while the singers streamed past the windows of the court-house.

The books he used to study were piled in confusion on the floor of his parlour, where he had tossed them out of his trunk on the day of his arrival. He had neither wife nor sister to arrange them for him, so there they would in all probability remain. He was half minded to refresh himself with a little reading, but was too lazy to get up and fetch a book. Just then came a knock at his door. "Come in," called Rath Marquardsen, and the old clerk of the court-house entered, staggering under a pile of musty volumes.

"You bade me clean out the drawers, and bring you these old books to look over, Herr Rath," said the clerk. "Here they are, the records of justice in Gottingen for the last hundred years. Surely your worship won't be troubled to read this stupid stuff? Better let me throw it into the stove."

And he tossed the books upon the table with a gesture of disdain. But the Rath regarded them with very different eyes.

"Pray leave them there," cried he, spreading his hands over them as though to guard a treasure. "Ah, that will do. Wilt thou try my beer and tobacco?"

The clerk went away muttering: "When the Herr Rath has been as long about the courts as I, he will not care for law books out of business hours."

Antiquity had an immense charm for the Rath. The worm-eaten, calf-skin bindings, blackened edges of the leaves, and musty smell of the ancient books helped him to call up the vanished generations who had used them. They began to pass before the eye of his fancy in shadowy rows, reacting the tragic or tranquil scenes of their little day on earth. Therefore, the moment the clerk was gone, he drew the lamp near him, and began to turn over the yellow pages of the records.

They were not particularly exciting. Most of them were meagre notes of trials, compressed into as few words as possible; but at length, in examining the very oldest book of all, he came upon an entry which interested him so much that he read it over and over again. This page was headed, "Trial of Jacob Winterwerb for Forgery," and at the bottom of the leaf was pasted a sheet of crumpled letter paper, closely written in a curious, crabbed, but sufficiently legible hand.

Our bookworm pounced upon this ancient manuscript as a gold-digger might pounce upon a nugget, or a gourmet upon a chef d'œuvre of Soyer. Putting on his spectacles—for, like many Germans, he was troubled with weak eyes—he began to read the faded yellow writing:

"August 7th, 1751.—I have returned home after a long, tiring day in the court-house"—commenced the MS.—"but weary though I am, I cannot sleep: I cannot forget the events of this day. A strange gloom hangs over me. A fearful curse which was uttered in my hearing keeps obtruding itself upon my memory, and some power that I am totally unable to control or resist impels me to write it down. Yet surely it was enough that the recording angel should mark Jacob Winterwerb's imprecation: must his fellow-sinner record it too? As Rath of Gottingen, I have had to try my old neighbour Jacob for the dark crime of forgery. It was hard for me to try him, but the extreme hardness of my case is, that I still believe him to be guilty, although his countrymen have acquitted him.

"I have had more opportunity for observing his daily conduct than any other man in Gottingen, and what I have noticed makes me fear he has forsworn himself to-day. He would plead his own cause—he would defend himself. Yes! he was quite clever enough to do it well. We were boys together, Jacob and I, and wicked though he be, I bear him a kindness still; I cannot endure to let my mind dwell upon his eternal loss!

"I am impelled to write it down. Probably everyone else who was present in the court-house to-day has forgotten the extraordinary curse by which he bound himself, but the remembrance of it keeps me restless in spite of my fatigue. He said, raising his hand towards

heaven: 'If I am not speaking God's truth, may my body never turn to dust in the grave!'

"Poor Jacob! hated by all but me, perhaps God of His mercy may yet lead you to repentance.

"I am safe enough in writing down what he said, because no mortal eye will read the lines I have now written until Jacob and I shall both have gone to our account. I shall leave the MS. sealed and directed to my son Franz; he will do with it as he pleases.

"Jacob Winterwerb has lived in the house adjoining mine ever since his marriage, thirty years ago. Our gardens lie side by side, separated only by a low hedge. His eldest brother, Herman, was the richest merchant in Gottingen, which is saying something where all are wealthy.

"The brothers lived together until Herman's death, which took place two months ago. Their household consisted of the two old men and two lads, Peter, the only son of Jacob, and Güstel, the son of their poor sister Netta, who died young, leaving her little child to the care of his uncles. Poor Netta Winterwerb! Ah, well, well! I have ever taken a peculiar interest in her boy!

"My Franz and the two youths next door were schoolfellows and playfellows, just as Jacob, Herman and I used to be many years before. Netta's son was a good lad, honest, kindly, and generous: but Jacob's boy inherited his father's mean and selfish qualities, and these were fostered by the education he received.

"The rich uncle was an invalid for three years before his death. It was Güstel who tended him like the gentlest nurse, who wheeled his chair about the garden, who lighted his meerschaum, or brought him his coffee, or rubbed his cramped limbs by the hour. Walking in my garden on these occasions, I often heard the sick man say: 'Good boy, you do not get tired of me; you do not think me a burden; but you shall be rewarded. I shall leave you every kreutzer I am worth in the world. You shall be the richest man in Gottingen.' And I used to see the lad's fine eyes grow dim as he stammered forth: 'Oh, my dear uncle, I do not want your money; I take care of you because I love you—you are the only friend I have on earth.'

"'I know all that, Güstel, but you are to be my heir, remember that.'

"Then the father and son would enter the garden, and seeing the uncle and nephew conversing so lovingly, used to be distraught with anger. I then heard Jacob say to the young man:

"'See that sneaking hypocrite yonder, worming himself into your uncle's favour, in hopes of inheriting his wealth. Go you and rub his gouty foot, and fetch his coffee, and you may supplant Güstel yet. Go, I say, and speak him fair. No? You are a lazy fool! You had rather break lamps on the Anlage with the students, or drink beer till you are like a brute, than take a little trouble to make your fortune. If that detestable Güstel is your uncle's heir it will be your own fault.'

"And Jacob used to give his son an angry push towards the couple in the arbour.

"Peter tried hard to please his uncle, but he set about it in such an awkward manner, and got tired so soon, that he never made any progress in supplanting Güstel. Half an hour's conversation with the poor invalid was more than he could put up with, and he was glad to rush away at the first opportunity to the beer cellars, where the students spent their time in gambling and drinking. I knew the whole family history; how Güstel had been beaten and tyrannised over by Jacob and Peter when he received sweatmeats and toys from his uncle in his childish days; and how, now that he was too old to be beaten, they showed their hatred and jealousy quite as plainly, though in a different way.

"I saw more than I liked to see out of my window, or while walking in my garden, and Herman was wont to complain of Peter and praise Güstel to me—always ending with his intention of making the latter his heir.

"There was something very like murder in old Jacob's eyes when he saw his brother and nephew together. At such times I trembled for my neighbours, so rich, but so little at ease or content.

"At length Herman died. He had not been able to leave his room for some months before his death, and there Güstel had attended him with the greatest tenderness.

"The funeral was over, and the will read. What was our surprise to hear that it was made in favour of Peter, not of Güstel. I shall not linger over what is so well-known to every townsman of Gottingen. No need to tell how the universal suspicion of foul play gained ground, or how suspicious circumstances came cropping up by degrees, until at last Jacob Winterwerb stood his trial on the charge of having erased the name of Güstel and inserted that of Peter, and has been acquitted. In the sight of man he is now virtually spotless: how stands he in the sight of God? It is this question that troubles me, for I cannot believe him innocent, knowing all I know; yet if guilty, how came Matheus and Folkshausen to swear that they witnessed the drawing out and signing of the will. Can Jacob have bribed them to perjure themselves also? If so, a crushing weight of guilt hangs over him. That was an awful speech: 'If I am not swearing God's truth, may my body never moulder in the grave.' I might indeed have damaged his cause, but I was the Rath, not one of the witnesses."

The next entry was dated two years later.

"1753. It is almost two years and three months since the trial. Jacob Winterwerb's first act on gaining possession of Herman's wealth, was to turn his nephew out of doors. Nothing was heard of the unfortunate youth until six months afterwards, when he came to my dwelling late one night, worn to a shadow. His clothes were threadbare, but the saddest change was in his pinched, sunken face—

the once handsome face that his Uncle Herman had so loved and admired.

"He had been living in a miserable garret upon the pocket-money he had saved during his prosperity, and the sale of his uncle's various gifts; but this store was spent to the last kreutzer, and for the last two days he had been starving. Another year, he said, would see him through the university, and fit him for a profession, and he implored me to give him some copying to do, or assist him in some other way to make a little money. Do it, he urged, for my Uncle Herman's sake! I was, indeed, most willing to befriend him for the sake of my Netta, his mother, my own early love. So he came to live with us, and he and Franz attended lectures together. Jacob never forgave me for harbouring the lad whom he hated, as bad men will always hate the injured; he had kept up a semblance of neighbourliness till then, but at that period our final rupture took place. Güstel got on well: he is now a Pfarrer in Ziegelhausen, useful and respected.

"Jacob's strange curse is haunting me to-day. I have only just returned from his funeral, and ere I sleep must conclude this memoir. Perhaps when the last word is written I may be able to forget.

"Jacob's end came very suddenly. I fear me his son was no gentle nurse during the one week of his illness.

"A vast concourse of his townsmen helped to lay Jacob in his grave beneath the row of yew-trees called the Seven Sisters, in our cemetery outside the Friedrich's Thor. It is there the rich men of Gottingen all lie, each in his narrow house, underneath his marble monument.

"The tallest yew has Jacob's tomb in shadow. There stands the hoary sister, gaunt and grim, stretching her black arms over the white urn, whereon she sheds her crimson berries in autumn, staining the marble like drops of blood, and weeping icy tears the winter through, which gradually wash out the stains.

"Oh, Jacob, Jacob! is that marble urn and your gorgeous coffin all that is left to you of your wealth? Farewell: I am not your judge. You have entered the presence of a higher Judge, into whose hands we must all fall at last."

"Du lieber Himmel!" muttered Rath Marquardsen, fingering the yellow manuscript tenderly: "this man should have been a preacher: he was thrown away upon the magistracy."

There was a note at the foot of the page in a different handwriting, to the effect that Franz Folkshausen had found the above among his late father's papers, and had placed it with the annals of the court-house for the year 1753.

Rath Marquardsen sat meditating beside his stove, but his delight with the MS. was fast changing into a creeping, grisly terror, such as he had never experienced in all his life before. Jacob's strange curse

had taken full possession of his imagination, and he was afraid to look up lest he should see the old man's covetous, cruel eyes fixed upon him. He had a horrible idea that if he turned round he might find him at his elbow, or peeping at him from behind the window-curtain, which was certainly moving slightly.

In his unreasoning trepidation the Rath got up and made an undignified retreat into his bed-room, looking behind him at every step. He tumbled into bed after but short toilet operations, feeling safe only when he drew the eider-down plumeau over his head.

But wicked old Jacob followed him there, and tormented him all night in dreams. He dreamt that he proceeded to the cemetery at Friedrich's Thor, got the sexton to open the grave, and found Jacob's body undecayed in its velvet coffin; that it opened its eyes when the light reached it, and springing up, clutched him by the throat. He awoke trembling, with cold drops of perspiration standing on his face. Falling asleep again, the same vivid dream awakened him.

Strange to say, the impression did not wear off, like most hallucinations, with the daylight; but Jacob's history haunted him all the time he was busy in the court-house. So instead of going home to dinner, he went to his friend and crony, Professor von Schenk, of the College Museum, and showed him his treasure trove, the yellow MS.

A very long discussion between these two erudite men of Gottingen ended in their taking their hats, and setting out arm-in-arm for the cemetery. Marquardsen led his friend past the forest of little black crosses where the peasants lay, to the broad alley where reposed the great and noble, a stately assembly of broken columns, snowy urns, and tall monuments. The tombs of those lately dead were known ere you came close enough to read the date of their inscriptions, by the fresh wreaths of everlastings, which dear, loving hands had hung there last All Souls' Day, and by the bright gardens that flourished over their inmates' quiet breasts.

The name of Winterwerb was well-nigh forgotten in Gottingen, so that the Rath did not dream of searching among these for Jacob's grave. He hurried on to where the seven old yew trees stood in hoary array, and there, sure enough, was the beautiful marble urn, no longer white, but grey and venerable after the lapse of a century. "Here it is!" cried Rath Marquardsen, in a hoarse tone, that almost startled himself. "'Jacob Winterwerb, who departed this life June 23, 1753, deeply respected and regretted.'"

"Stay you there," said the business-like professor, "while I summon the sexton."

"Not I," said our friend, trying to conceal a shudder; "I shall accompany you."

The day was far advanced before the sexton and his assistants had removed the urn, and dug away the earth from the coffin-lid. Several people, attracted by what was going on, came hurrying up just as the

coffin was raised and laid upon a flat tombstone. Rath Marquardsen shivered, and would fain have retreated, but shame kept him on the spot. He was not prepared for the sight that met his eyes when the lid was raised. The professor rubbed his spectacles, and bent over the coffin calmly speculative, as he was wont to inspect a new curiosity in the museum.

He lifted the folds of the shroud, which, to his intense amazement, was white and spotless as it was on the day of Jacob's funeral, and beneath lay the body undecayed, after a hundred years' sojourn in the tomb. The Rath gave one trembling glance and turned away hastily, seized with a sudden fit of shivering, while the spectators, pressing round the coffin, shouted with horror and wonder. Meanwhile, the professor coolly proceeded with his examination. He raised the long grey locks that rested on the velvet pillow, and stroked the parchment-like cheeks. "We must have this fellow in the museum!" cried he, delightedly; "a perfect mummy, preserved by miracle. I shall write off to Heidelberg and Munich, and get Schulze and Heine here to examine it, and then I shall prepare a paper for the *Alterthümer Blatt*."

"No, no, Von Schenk. Put him back in his grave; I shall never forgive myself for this desecration of the tomb. I wish I had not read that confounded MS., then I should not have had that wild dream, nor have brought you here to disturb the dead. Replace him, I pray you."

"I shall place him, not replace him. He shall stand between our Theban mummy and our Mastodon giganteus, in the left-hand corner of the great museum saal. My dear sentimentalist, the responsibility rests upon the University of Gottingen, not on you. Pray set your mind at ease."

The Rath turned away in real misery, and walked home, pursued by the voice of Von Schenk, who called after him to enquire whether he were willing to resign all claim to the mummy, which was his property by right of discovery. It was a long time before he prevailed upon himself to visit the museum. At length some ladies begged him to take them over the college, and he could hardly refuse. Old Jacob was leaning against the wall in his corner between the geological animals and the ancient Egyptian; he was dressed in his shroud, and very grim and horrible he looked, but he was surrounded by an admiring crowd, to whom Professor von Schenk was relating the true story of "Jacob's Curse; or, The Mummy of Gottingen."

LETITIA MCCLINTOCK.

MAY.

See, she comes, the beauteous maiden,
With the sunlight on her hair;
Crowned with leaves, with blossoms laden,
Gifts bestowing everywhere!
Through the woods her light feet dancing,
Waking with their fairy tread
Tiny streamlets, dimpling, glancing,
Neath her blushes, rosy red.

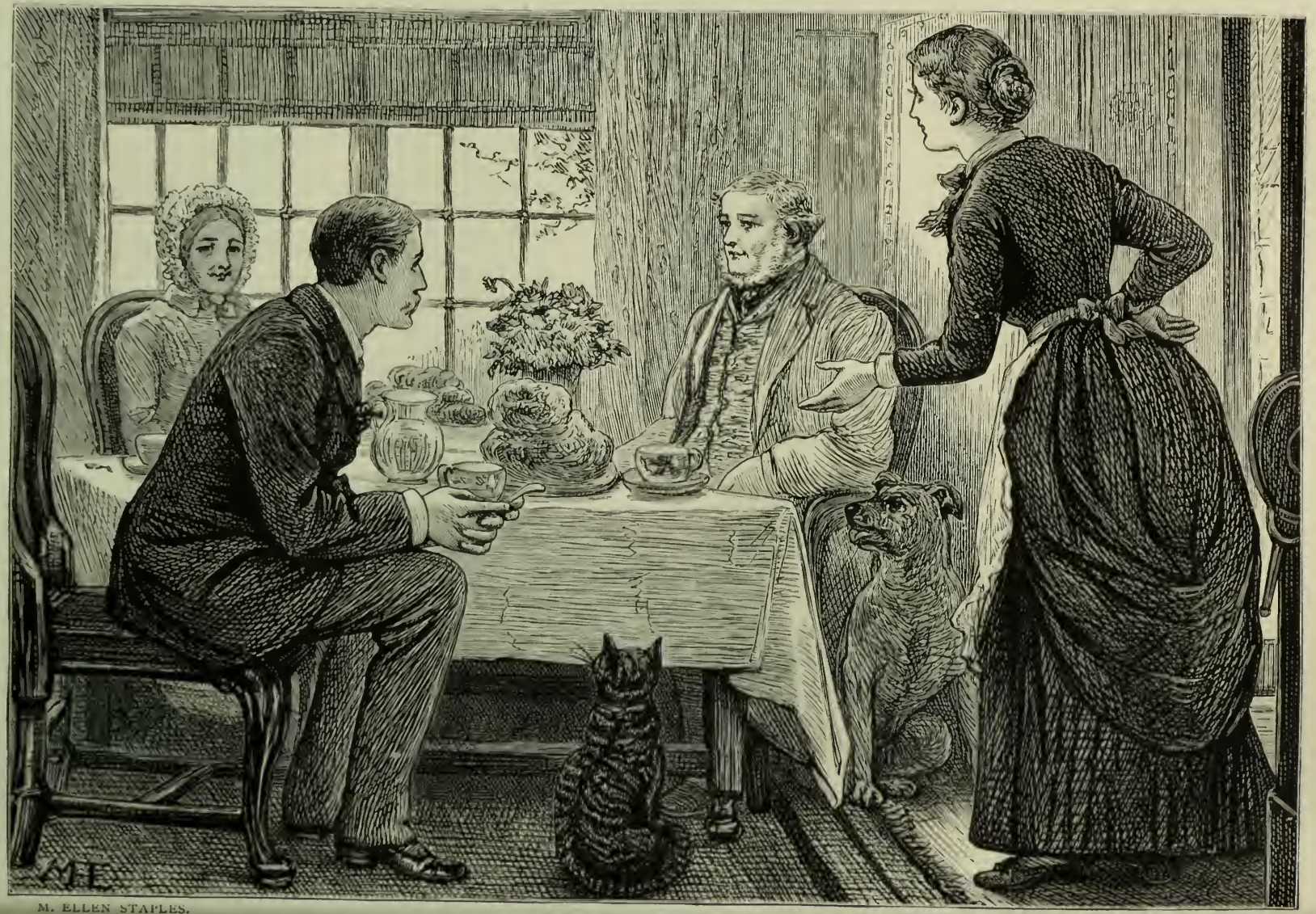
Through her locks fresh winds are blowing,
Flash her eyes like meteors bright;
And her emerald mantle flowing,
Spangled o'er with daisies white,
From each mystic fold is flinging
Sparkling gems of crystal dew,
While the merry lark is singing,
Oh, so gladly, in the blue!

Lo, she meets the children roving,
Through green lanes with cheeks aglow!
And in whispers soft and loving,
Tells them where her sweet buds blow.
Ah, how swiftly fly the shadows
When her radiant face appears;
Fairer, brighter, seem the meadows
Laughing through her happy tears!

Gliding through the busy city,
Ever gracious, sweet, and fair,
Lo, she breathes with tenderest pity,
On the weary toilers there.
Through dark courts and dingy alleys
Smiles she brightly on the gloom—
Whispering of fair country valleys,
Where the lovely cowslips bloom.

Rich and poor haste forth to meet her,
Hers is such a magic voice,
That the grateful hearts that greet her
Thrill with rapture, and rejoice.
Happy childhood crowned with daisies,
Tottering age with locks of grey,
With one impulse sing the praises
Of earth's goddess, beauteous May!

Fanny Forrester.



M. ELLEN STAPLES.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1884.

THE WHITE WITCH.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN ARTIST'S SKETCH-BOOK.

GODFREY MAYNE stood still in the silent and empty church for a few moments, to collect himself. His nerves were as well under control as are those of most young men; but they had been tried, and he thought that his presence of mind had not been quite what it should have been. All his hope now was that Mary Dixon, whom he had so unceremoniously locked into the vestry, would be sensible enough to obey him and to give no token of her presence there by calling out for aid. Surely she might have seen that he was in earnest, in what he did; that there must be some good and imperative reason for it.

He watched the girl, who had been blowing the organ, go out through the church door; he heard her exclamation on suddenly finding herself confronted by Sir William Hunt, seated in the porch. He heard her say, "I beg pardon, sir," heard the tread of her thick boots on the paved pathway outside, and then he very slowly followed her. He allowed her time to cross the churchyard and go out at the gate, before he went through the church-door himself and met Sir William, who had risen to his feet, and seemed to be somewhat calmer.

"Now I will go in with you, and see this—see this singer," said Sir William, laying his hand on Godfrey's arm.

"Did you not see her just now as she passed out?" asked the young man, making his tone one of surprise.

The Baronet's agitation increased at once. "She has not passed out," said he sternly. "No one has come through this door but a young village-girl, of fifteen or sixteen."

"Exactly. But that is the nightingale. Not a bird of fine plumage, admit, but for all that ——"

"Godfrey, you are jesting; you must be trying to deceive me.

What do you mean? Tell me, my boy. You would not play upon my feelings wantonly, I know: you are striving to spare me. I can bear it —I can bear it all, my dear boy: let me see her at once."

He pressed his way past the other without waiting for an answer, and, entering the church, walked quickly across to the organ. But no one was there. Godfrey hated himself for the falsehood he had told, the deception he must practise. But he saw no help for it, if he would save Mary Dixon from an awful fate which he himself could not yet understand or realise: and he braced his reluctance up to do it.

Sir William was walking about; hunting, searching, and listening. As he approached the vestry, Godfrey went forward and spoke, lest in the silence the least sound should be heard within.

"What is the matter, Sir William? Do you think the singer is so modest that she has hidden herself somewhere at the approach of a human tread? I told you that she passed you in the porch."

"Silence," said the Baronet sharply, as he tried the vestry-door. But it was locked and the key was in Godfrey's pocket. "Where is the key of this place, Godfrey?"

"The clerk keeps it, I fancy," answered Godfrey.

Sir William hesitated. Godfrey's ears were as keenly on the alert as his. But there was no sound to be heard, save that of the church-clock. The elder man was utterly non-plussed: and his suspicions were aroused.

"Godfrey, what is the meaning of this? You are playing some trick upon me; I know you are. Yes, yes, you can stare and look surprised now, but out in the porch there ten minutes ago, you were not so calm; something was the matter with you. I wondered what it was: you were agitated, restless, and you became so suddenly. Why did you tell me to stay out there while you went in? Where is the woman who was singing?"

He laid a trembling hand on the young man's arm; but Godfrey was strung up to perfect coolness. "She must be half-way home by this time, Sir William. I see you won't believe me; but just tell me this: what motive could a girl possibly have for being ashamed of a voice like that? I should hardly have thought, though, it would take so strong an effect upon a connoisseur like you."

"And do you think a connoisseur could mistake singing like that for the untrained tones of a village choir-girl? I will not leave this church until you have told me the truth."

"Do you think I have not done that already? But you are right about the training: the girl has studied at Manchester; and she lived there until lately with an aunt. People here don't seem to think much of her singing."

"But I tell you, Godfrey, I know the voice; there is a quality in it I could not mistake. I have heard it once, once before, in that same sacred song, and it lives in my memory always. I wake up and hear it at night; I shall hear it till I die."

"When did you hear the voice?" asked Godfrey. He was leaning against the great stone font, in the shadow of the oaken gallery above. He wanted to get out of the church, but Sir William was inclined to stay in it.

"I heard it—singing a light love song—just after the murder of my boy. When the love song ceased, it sang another: the sacred song we have been listening to now."

Godfrey bent his head in token of sympathy. He was burning to hear more: what connection the voice had with the murder: what connection the singer had with the murderers. But he dared not trust himself to ask, or to speak; his mouth was hot and dry, his lips were quivering. At last he spoke:

"I don't wonder the singing agitated you, if it woke such memories as that," he said, suppressing his agitation. "But the resemblance between the voices must be accidental, Sir William. The one you heard two or three years ago could not have been Janet Reade's!"

"No," assented the elder man absently. He had regained command of himself, and was sinking back into the gentle, peaceable gentleman of everyday life. But he looked full at the young man's face as he added: "Janet Reade, you say, is the name of the girl I heard singing to-day."

"Yes, and who passed you in the porch."

"Passed me in the porch? Yes, I remember. And so this is the new organ!"

He examined the instrument, and played a few bars upon it; but he did not ask Godfrey to play. Then he went about the church, glancing around him, as before.

"We must not believe in miracles now, Godfrey, must we, unless they are at least eighteen hundred years old," he said at last, slowly. "But we may believe in spirits, and in destiny, and in the power of the human will. And I choose to say, in the face of science and of all the chemists, that it is a miracle which Heaven in its mercy has performed to help me in this church to-day."

Godfrey grew cold. He answered nothing; he could not read the old man's thoughts: he dreaded to hear them put into words. But he knew that the belief Sir William had expressed at his dinner-table—that he should hear the voice again—had been fulfilled too well. Not another word, however, about the singer did Sir William say; he walked through the church from end to end and then observed that he must think of returning.

"I will not call at the Abbey now, Godfrey; I feel unnerved."

Putting his arm again within Godfrey's, Sir William led him through the churchyard and along the avenue beyond it, to the high road. The groom, on horseback, waited there, with his master's steed. Mounting, Sir William bent his face down to the younger man's, with a whisper.

"Godfrey, I have always known you to be honest and honourable,

therefore I see that some mystery lies behind this, and that you had some motive for concealing—as you must have done—that woman from me. Unless you are deceived, and she concealed herself. But you must know that singing could not have been Janet Reade's!"

He rode away, and Godfrey returned to release Mary. In the churchyard then, sauntering about to examine the tombstones, was the Wildings' artist lodger. He was at the farther end of it; but Godfrey took the precaution to shut the church-door as he entered. He fumbled with the key for some moments at the lock of the vestry-door, for it was dark about there, and he was in a fever of excitement. At last the key turned, but the door did not open. He gave it a slight push, then a rougher one; it moved a little way, and he knew there must be something against it. He forced it a little further, and put his head round to see what the obstacle was.

And it was Miss Dixon. She lay on the ground near the door; her dress had got wedged underneath and prevented its opening. With a cry of dismay, Godfrey squeezed himself through and shut the door. Had he killed her? frightened her to death? Stooping, he raised her in his arms; but in his terrible excitement he could not tell whether her heart still beat. There was a bottle of water on the table—the nice fresh water which Simpson, the clerk, changed once a month or so for the Vicar's use on Sundays. Godfrey spilt rather than sprinkled it over her, calling to her in broken whispers. When at last he saw by a faint movement that she was returning to life, a mist came before his eyes as he muttered, "Thank God!" and then he pressed his lips to hers in a long, trembling kiss that sealed him her slave for ever.

To have set Sir William on the track of this fragile woman, however innocently, was a thought so horrible that he turned sick and shuddering. For it was himself he blamed for it. He ought never to have asked her to sing after what he had heard: and when he saw Sir William making for the church at the moment he knew she was there, he should have contrived to turn him from it. As he gazed at her beautiful, wan face in bitter repentance, he formed there and then a solemn resolution: that he would make such amends as lay in man's utmost power, by henceforth striving to shield and defend her.

When she at last opened her eyes, he did not utter a word. She half raised her head and let it fall again on his arm; she felt the thrill which her unconscious movement stirred in him; and looking up at his face with terror, she rose tottering to her feet, and drew away from him.

"Don't touch me!" she cried, in a tone of pain, but with a dazed look as if she were partly wandering. "Why did you put me in here that he might see me? I had done nothing to you."

"I put you in that he might not see you," said Godfrey gently.

"Oh, how cruel you are! And to lock me in, so that I could

not get away out of his sight! There was no escape for me, no escape. I did not think you would have done it," she added tremulously, with a look that cut Godfrey to the quick.

"Listen," said he, gently. "I locked you in, when I saw the terrible effect your singing had upon him, so that he might not see you."

She had tottered to one of the two chairs the vestry contained and sat listening to him in a listless, vacant way, as if her faculties were scarcely awake yet.

"But he did see me," she said. "He looked at me through the window there and called to me by my name. I am sure it was he, though it did not look like him: I am sure it was his voice."

"Indeed, you must have fancied it. He did not come to the window at all, or look in. He was in the porch all the time, until I went away with him."

Mary put her hands to her head and gazed at Godfrey; then gazed at the window, and shuddered. "What have I been saying?" she cried, in a more collected voice, coming then only partially to her senses. "What was it that frightened me?"

"You fancied someone looked at you through the window here?"

"And was it not so?"

"On my honour, no."

She seemed bewildered. "It must have been my fancy, then! Yet why did I faint? I have never fainted more than two or three times in my life. But—why then did you hide me in here? What was it you said about—about my singing?"

"Sir William seemed to recognise it; he said he did. I thought you might not care to meet him, so I put you in here."

"*Sir William!*" she exclaimed. "Sir William Hunt? Was he here?"

"Yes," he was in the porch and heard you sing 'Angels, ever bright and fair.' He is gone back to Goule now."

"I must go home," she shivered. "I must go home to mamma."

Godfrey was advancing to open the church door, but she flew after him and clung to his arm.

"Don't go without me; don't let me go back alone," she cried breathlessly.

A lump rose in Godfrey's throat as he looked down at her frightened, beseeching face, and felt the touch of her quivering, helpless fingers.

"No, no," he answered. "Where's your hat?"

It had fallen off and lay on the floor. He put her arm within his, and led her to the door.

"You must think my conduct very foolish and mysterious, I'm afraid, Mr. Godfrey," she said, trying to get back to her usual manner. "When I am better—this evening, perhaps—I will endeavour to explain it, and ——"

"You need not," said he, gazing into her eyes with an earnestness there was no mistaking.

With a look of unutterable thankfulness, she burst into tears. Passionate words of loving comfort rose to Godfrey's lips, though he would not have spoken them, when a footstep in the porch made her start away from him. It was only the organist, coming in to practise, but it checked effectually the emotion of both. She did not take his arm again, and they returned to the Abbey almost in silence. The timid, shrinking glances she cast around convinced Godfrey that apprehension lay upon her still. Once, when a dark form was discerned moving in the plantation, she instinctively put her hand through his arm of her own accord. He stopped for a moment.

"Now, don't tremble, and don't be frightened. Sir William is two or three miles off by this time, and you are as safe from him as if you were in another county."

But though the passionate kindness in his voice and eyes had some effect upon her, his words had none: every rush of the autumn wind through the tree-tops above them made her start, and when they turned into the drive which led up to the Abbey she looked round towards the church, not with the horror of a danger past, but with an intent, searching gaze as if she expected some sight she dreaded to meet her eyes. Godfrey looked back too: there are few imaginations strong enough to conjure up visible bodily shapes in broad daylight, and it occurred to him that someone might really have climbed up to the high vestry window and looked through at her, whom she, in the uncertain light might have mistaken for the man she evidently dreaded—Sir William. Boys from the village were often in the churchyard, and all boys were mischievous. It was possible, of course, that the artist lodging at the farm, whom Godfrey had seen reading the inscriptions on the tombstones, might have looked in, but he did not think so.

When they got to the Abbey, Godfrey led her straight upstairs to the school-room door. "I'll see you safe up lest you should fall," he said, laughingly. "Now," added he, as she entered, "if you will let me advise you, you will rest for a little while and then come down and have some tea. Don't go to Mrs. Mayne at all; you know you will only disturb and frighten her: indeed, if I were you, I wouldn't talk of this to anyone."

"You are very kind to me," she sighed.

Godfrey ran downstairs, and went back to the churchyard, to examine it. There were marks on the trodden-down grass under the vestry-window, and in bits of moss newly scraped out of the crevices of the stone, showing that someone had recently climbed up the wall to the window, which was within reach of the hands by a spring from the ground. There was nobody about now, however, and no further trace of recent visitors to the churchyard except a sketch-book, which

he picked up from the grass between the square tower and the churchyard wall. The book was a new one, with no name in it and no sketches but a rough pencil outline of the Abbey, taken from this point; and a few pages further a couple of more carefully drawn diagrams, which Godfrey did not examine very closely. He remembered that Nancy had spoken of their artist-lodger as a gentleman with more taste for easy adventure than for work; and it might well have been that, idling away his time in the churchyard, he had found out that something was going on inside the church, and in an attempt to satisfy his curiosity had been the unwitting cause of Mary's fright. The vestry window was at the back of the church, the porch being in the front; so that anyone on that side would not have been visible to Sir William Hunt or himself.

Godfrey walked round the walls of the church, seeing no one; the organist was still practising inside, so he went in and glanced through the building, with the same result. Then, with the sketch-book still in his hand, he strolled down the lane by the side of the churchyard wall towards the marsh which stretched from the foot of Croxham hill away to the river. He had scarcely gone half-way down the lane when he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs below him and Dick Wilding's voice encouraging Smiler to go faster. As soon as they came in sight, Dick dismounted from his favourite, which he was riding bare-backed, and led him up the hill by a bit of rope.

"Come up, Smiler; come and fetch the master's book: come on; come up!" said he, with many cries and gestures as usual.

On seeing Godfrey he stopped short, being now only a few yards from him, and fixed his eyes on the sketch-book with a look of dismay.

"Is this what you were looking for, Dick? You can have it if you tell me who sent you for it."

But the lad was mistrustful of his enemy, and he pulled at the bit of rope nervously, without any answer, for a few moments, and then began to mutter:

"It's no good. The devil's got it; we mustn't take it, Smiler, we must go back to the master—we must go back, we must go back. He will scold us, but we can't help that."

"Now, look here, Dick," said Godfrey. "I will put this book down here; see; and you can take it back to your master the artist, and then you won't get scolded. When did he leave it in the churchyard, Dick? This afternoon, wasn't it?"

Dick nodded doubtfully; he considered parley with his enemy and Miss Dixon's enemy dangerous; he shambled hesitatingly up to the spot where Godfrey had laid the sketch-book down upon the bank, and after turning it over cautiously with one end of his finger, as if Godfrey's touch had bewitched the thing, he retreated without taking it up. Vaulting on to Smiler without another word, he rode to the bottom of the lane and disappeared round the turning by which he had come.

Godfrey shrugged his shoulders, took up the book, and slowly followed the semi-idiot down the lane. Being sure now that the owner of the sketch-book was the Wildings' lodger, he thought he would leave it at the farm on his way back and take the opportunity of reproving the lazy young artist for his impertinent curiosity; for he took it for granted, now, that the owner of the sketch-book was the cause of Mary's fright. He looked again at the pencilled outline of the Abbey, and decided that it was very poor; and at the diagrams; and he decided that the artist's sense of the picturesque was limited, since he could please himself as well in drawing ground-plans of the Abbey and the farm as in sketching the many pretty nooks that lay about Croxham woods and dales.

Godfrey got out of the lane over the edge into the wood, and made his way through the slender young trees which covered the hill on this side, among the dead leaves of autumn, up towards the farm. It was between four and five o'clock, and he found the farmer going in to tea. Nancy was at the door, looking up and down, and Godfrey asked her if the lodger was indoors, waiting until Mr. Wilding had passed into the house before questioning her.

"Yes, he is in there," said she in a low voice, nodding towards the door of the sitting-room where Mary had waited for the monk's appearance. "He's writing a letter, I believe; at least he sent Dick to me a minute ago to get the inkstand refilled. Do you want to see him?"

"Well, yes, I should like to speak to him. I don't wish to disturb him though, if he's writing letters. I'll come in after dinner."

"Won't you come in and take a cup of tea with us, and see mother, Master Godfrey? She thinks you've not treated her well lately, never coming to have a chat with her. She says she supposes you're getting too proud to remember the time when you used to sit on her knee and pull her cap off."

"That's it, Nanny; I'm getting so handsome and so clever that I can't believe I was ever a rude and tiresome little boy," answered he, laughing. "I'll come in and tell her so."

"Mr. Cattermole often comes in about this time for a chat with father, and to have some tea at our table; so you may perhaps see him," remarked Nancy. And Godfrey followed her to the large, homely day-room.

"Well, Mrs. Wilding," he began, "Nanny tells me you want me to sit on your lap and pull your cap off as I used to do. I am quite ready, but I warn you you'll find me heavier than I was fifteen years ago."

"Ah, you're just the same as ever," cried Mrs. Wilding, delighted by this brilliant pleasantry. "You always would have your joke, Mr. Godfrey. You don't come often to see me now: I was only saying to Nancy the other day that now there's ladies about the Abbey again you don't care to come and waste your time on old Nursey Wilding,

as you all used to call me—you, and Miss Isabel, and poor Master Charlie."

Nancy broke in quickly with a shrewd glance at him:

"Bless you, mother, it's not the ladies that keep him away; it's business, is it not, Master Godfrey? It always is business that keeps gentlemen away from places they don't care to go to."

"If you are going to be saucy, Nancy, I shall threaten to be off this minute; and not come back again in a hurry."

"It's the women's old fault, sir, too long a tongue," spoke the farmer good-humouredly. Mr. Wilding would prose on by the hour when he could get anybody to appear to listen to him, and one of his favourite subjects was the talkativeness of women. "And Nanny has got more than her share of it; but it's past mending now, I'm afraid. We must take them as we find them, Mr. Godfrey, as our fathers did before us."

"And with the qualities we get from our fathers," said Nancy meaningly, with a pleasant nod towards her father.

"As Mr. Cattermole says," continued the farmer, "we may think ourselves lucky when a long tongue is their worst fault; for it's ten to one that, with all their open-hearted chatter, they are all the time thinking something quite different from what they say."

"So Mr. Cattermole says that, does he? He goes in for being a philosopher and a cynic, I suppose?" remarked Godfrey, turning to Mrs. Wilding, by whom he was sitting.

"I don't know, Master Godfrey, I'm sure," she answered simply. "All I've noticed about him is that he has a very good appetite and is fond of talking."

"He is Sir Oracle here now," said Nancy. "Dick follows him like his shadow, and father thinks he is the wisest man that ever lived—just for a few cheap jokes, and a good story or two picked up on his travels."

"Has he travelled far?" asked Godfrey: remembering that many a man will say he has "travelled" if he has only crossed the Channel to France and back.

"I think he has," said Nancy: "he seems to be acquainted with a good many places. His tongue goes a good deal faster than his paint-brush, and to better purpose; I will say that for him."

"Ah, he knows women and their ways too well to waste his time courting them, and that's why you don't like him," said the farmer to his daughter. "You should have heard him here last night, Mr. Godfrey, telling a story of how a man was wanted by the police for embezzling a large sum of money, and how they tracked him, as they thought, all the way to Marseilles; and when they got there they found it was a woman disguised as a man that they had been following all the time, while he had quietly escaped to America. More than that, the woman managed to evade them before their very eyes, as it were, and to go out to join him there! There's hardly a robbery

of magnitude takes place but what women have had a hand in it, he says. They're so neat and so cunning, and they seem to take to crime quite natural, if it comes in their way."

"Of course if he takes his knowledge of women out of the police reports, he can make them out as bad as he pleases without much trouble," cried Nancy, with some scorn. "But for all his cynical talk, he does not shut up his eyes or turn round and go the other way when he sees a pretty woman coming along a path to meet him."

Her father turned his head and looked at her. She seemed rather sorry she had said so much, and began cutting cake vigorously, with a flush on her bright face, after glancing at Godfrey, who returned her look curiously.

"Oh, ho! So Mr. Cattermole has two ways of talking, then: one for me, and one for you—is that it, Nanny girl?" asked Mr. Wilding.

"And one for mother, and another for Dick; and I'll be bound he'll have a different one altogether for Master Godfrey," said she, drily.

"What an interesting man he must be," said Godfrey. "I wish he would come in and show himself off in his different characters."

"It's all nonsense, Mr. Godfrey; don't you believe her," said the farmer. "Mr. Cattermole's just like anybody else, only a little more entertaining than men are in general, especially if they have not been about the world as he has. There's that to be said for most rolling stones, that they are good company; and he does not pretend to be more. I wonder why he is not coming in for some tea?"

"Perhaps he hardly likes to come if he knows that Mr. Godfrey is here," suggested the wife.

"I don't think he's troubled with shyness. I want Mr. Godfrey to hear some of his tales. He told us a long one last evening—a frightful thing. A girl, a young lady she was, killed her lover by slow doses of poison; and though it was well known to the police that she had done it, they could not bring the proofs home to her, with all their cleverness, and she got off."

"Oh, John, don't begin upon those dreadful stories!" implored Mrs. Wilding. "I can't bear them."

"But how does he know of these things?" questioned Godfrey. "Do the police tell him?"

The farmer considered. "Well, I expect so, sir."

Nancy tossed her head. "I don't suppose he knows a single policeman. He must get the accounts from a paper called the *Police News*. I have seen it in his room—with a lot of sensational pictures in it."

"To cultivate his own taste as an artist," quietly spoke Godfrey: and they all laughed.

At that moment the sitting-room door was heard to open, and Dick came in.

"Give me some tea for Mr. Cattermole, Nanny," said he in a low voice, subdued in the presence of Godfrey, whom he glanced at sideways with dislike and suspicion.

"Won't he come in, Dick?" she asked.

"No, no: he said, 'Bring me some tea here,'" answered Dick. "He's writing."

"Very well, I'll take it in to him."

"Ask him to come in here, Nancy," said her father, as she was going out. "Tell him Mr. Godfrey Mayne is here. He is a gentleman, sir," he added to Godfrey; "one can see he has been that, though he is a bit the opposite in his talk sometimes. But he's not too fine for us simple folk; as that pert lass says, he has seen enough of the world to suit himself to his company."

Nancy came back with the disappointing news that Mr. Cattermole was so busy with his letters for the post, he could not come in to tea that evening, and Godfrey left the farm with the sketch-book still in his possession. He had a feeling that the artist had avoided him through a shrewd suspicion that young Mr. Mayne had something unpleasant to say about impertinent curiosity at vestry windows. The sketch-book would serve as an excuse for another attempt to make the acquaintance of the too enterprising stranger.

"Why does your artist not like women, Nancy?" asked Godfrey, as she came to the door with him.

"I'm sure I haven't the least idea, Master Godfrey."

"Ah, I thought not. Of course a fact is enough for you, and you would not think of troubling your head about reasons. It would not occur to you to ask yourself for instance, whether this artist gentleman had been disappointed by some young lady he happened to admire, and so goes in for abuse wholesale."

"Oh, no," laughed Nancy. "It wouldn't occur to anybody who saw Mr. Cattermole; he does not give you the idea of having ever gone in for that kind of thing. He talks too ill of women to have suffered much at the hands of any one of them, or I'm much mistaken. He has his grievances, like the rest of us, but they're not of the lover's sort."

"Then of what sort are they?"

"Ah, that is asking more than I can tell."

"More than you *will* tell, do you mean?"

"Perhaps, Master Godfrey. I have never broken a confidence yet, and I'm not going to begin now."

"Then he has made you his confidant?"

"Just in a little way, sir. Not much."

"I hope you are not getting to like him: he is a stranger to you, remember," said Godfrey, gravely.

"That I am not," returned the girl heartily. "I *don't* much like him; but I am rather sorry for him."

"Possibly he suits himself to you just as he does to other people,

and tells you as many stories as he does to your father," suggested Godfrey, in mischief, now, more than for any other motive.

Nancy looked rather startled for a moment. "Well, perhaps so, Master Godfrey; but if it be so, they would affect me no more than the stories he tells my father affect him."

And it was clear that if the confidences of the versatile artist were really love-plaints, then they had indeed fallen upon stony ground.

Godfrey hunted about in the Abbey garden for a poor little late rose for Mary, but finding that it was a very unworthy present, he pulled about all the most delicate ferns in the conservatory in search of the prettiest setting of pale green he could find to enhance its meagre attractions. She might be in the drawing-room now, and he would speak just a few words of reassuring comfort, and bid her rely upon his brotherly protection always—a Christian occupation which no doubt brings its own blessing with it, but which puts certain other obligations out of one's head. The sight of the square-looking, ugly Vicarage walls through the trees at the other end of the long meadow, woke no pangs of conscience in Godfrey; his head and heart were too full of the image of one girl for another to find room there even as a foil. He passed from the garden to the refectory, to be suddenly roused to a sense of horror by the sound which broke upon his ears as he placed his fingers on the handle of the inner door. It was the voice of Sir William Hunt in the hall.

Godfrey dashed onwards, but not in time: his father and Sir William were entering the drawing-room. If Mary were in there, it was impossible to prevent the meeting. Mr. Mayne was speaking.

"Fate has been against us, but I shall be able to introduce you to my wife at last," he was saying cheerfully. "I will send Mary up to fetch her."

And they all went in.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE TRACK.

When Sir William Hunt rode away after leaving Godfrey at the top of the church avenue, it was with the intention of returning to Goule Park. Presently, waking up out of reflection, he reined-in his horse; then, after some hesitation, turned and rode back, passed the Vicarage gate, and took a narrow side road to the right of it, which led to the village.

By nature a somewhat shy and lonely man, the one subject upon which his mind had fed continually during the solitary hours that he passed in his study or on horseback, or in long walks, was the murder of his eldest son. The mystery which had veiled the details of the crime from every attempt he had made to discover them; the

swiftness with which the two persons whom he knew to be implicated in it—one of whom he knew by name, the other both by name and by sight—had disappeared from Rome within a few days of the murder, leaving no trace; had thrown a tragic interest round the matter which kept his imagination alert, and prevented the wound from healing. In a degree, time had been exercising its soothing properties; but within the past week or two a matter had occurred to bring back all the trouble, and with renewed force.

Sir William had entered a crowded shop one day at Cheston, and while waiting to be served had caught sight of a face which he knew to be that of a woman connected with the murder of his son; she had seen, recognised, and escaped him, in the moment when, sick with the shock, he had turned his head away and put his hand before his eyes to recover the vision which seemed to fail him at the unexpected sight of her. When he looked up, she was gone.

It had been no idle fancy; he knew that: the face, the voice of that lady-like woman had lived in his memory and in his dreams ever since the day when he had seen her and spoken with her in Rome two years and a half ago. His hungry, fierce wish for justice upon her for her treachery, and upon one who was an accomplice for the actual crime, had been roused into active life by the sight of her fair, deceitful face. He had been so sure he was not mistaken, that he, after taking an hour for consideration, wrote to Scotland Yard to engage the services of a detective: and Sir William was beginning now rather to wonder why the officer did not make his appearance. He concluded that one, suitable to be sent down, was not at the moment at liberty; but he looked out for him daily.

In writing to Scotland Yard, Sir William had acted in defiance of what he knew to be the wish of his pretty, tyrannical wife; whom he was accustomed to indulge in every whim, even at the cost of his own comfort and peace. Lady Hunt had grieved much more demonstratively than her husband over her boy's death, at the time; but now it was a sorrow past, a horror over, and she dreaded nothing so much as that Sir William should discover the guilty people, drag the terrible old story into life again, force her as it were into another long period of mourning with the freshness off, and of abstinence from the gaiety which her still youthful spirit loved. And in order to put off the evil day when her husband's morbid taste for horrors, as she considered it, should bring all these evils back upon her, she would willingly have annihilated Scotland Yard with its people, had it been in her power, until Sir William's craze should have subsided.

"Don't you wish our boy's destroyers to be punished?" Sir William asked her one day, in a tone of grieved remonstrance. "They have escaped discovery hitherto; but you cannot, I think, wish they could escape it for ever."

"It would be so frightful an annoyance to us to have the house

overrun by detectives," she retorted, plaintively. "The servants would all give warning: and I—I'm sure I could only take to my bed."

"What nonsense you talk, Harriet!" he exclaimed, in vexation. "Who is going to fill the house with detectives? I have written for one only: and he may not enter it above once or twice, just to take my instructions. He may be here any day; to-day, for aught I know; but you may rest assured that I shall not let him prove any source of annoyance to you. If he does not make his appearance speedily, I shall write up again to know the cause of the delay. My letter may have miscarried."

Lady Hunt coughed; and then burst into tears.

This little passage-at-arms occurred the morning following their dinner-party. In the afternoon, Sir William's suspicions, that one at least of the guilty parties must be in the neighbourhood, received a confirmation when he heard—and recognised—that voice in the church, which had haunted his memory for all the intervening years. And when, on his way home, he suddenly turned his horse back, it was in obedience to the thought that he ought to try and find out at once who that singer was, what name she went by, and where she might be found. Godfrey Mayne's wish to shield the fascinating adventuress woke no particular suspicion in him: wherever she went she must of necessity make mischief, and would turn young men's hot heads in this quiet country village, just as surely as she had turned that of his own son in Rome.

As he rode along the lane leading to the village, he met Mr. Thornhill's curate; a little mean-looking, ill-shaven man, with a strong dialect which nobody could ever trace to any particular county, and was, therefore, believed by some to be the result of individual research. His sermons were full of a wordy eloquence admirably suited to an orthodox rustic congregation, for it satisfied the ear while making no demands upon the intellect. Such as he was, however, Mr. Anson was popular; his good-humoured simplicity out of the pulpit making him as much liked by the well-educated members of the congregation, whom his sermons bored, as by the ignorant villagers, whom they bewildered. He greeted Sir William Hunt, whose grave manner always frightened him, with much deference, and wished he wouldn't stop.

But Sir William did stop. "How d'ye do, Mr. Anson," he said. "Can you direct me to the house of a girl named Janet Reade? She belongs to your parish, I believe."

"Janet Reade! Oh, yes, Janet belongs to the parish, Sir William; she's a very good sort of girl. Did you want her?"

"A good, truthful girl, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; at least, I am not aware that she has been found out telling untruths. She gave a smart bit of trouble when she first came home from Manchester, was restless, and that; but since Miss Dixon

up at the Abbey has taken her in hand, she has sobered down to be as tractable and docile as anyone could wish."

"And who does she live with?—and where? Can you direct me? I want to speak with her?"

"She lives with her mother, at the turn of the road that leads to the chapel: it's a small cottage, which stands back from the rest. I'm going that way, Sir William, and shall be glad to show it to you."

Sir William walked his horse gently beside the curate, who talked fast and fluently all the time, because he was shy; they went down the hill and so on to the narrow, ill-paved pathway which led up to Mrs. Reade's cottage. Sir William left his horse with his groom, thanked Mr. Anson, said good afternoon to him, and knocked at the cottage door with the handle of his whip.

A shrill child's voice called "Mother-r-r!" and after a short delay, the door was opened by a lady in soap-suds, who looked astonished, first at the gentleman standing there, next at the waiting horses, but did not lose her self-possession. She wiped her arms and curtseyed, waiting for him to speak. She did not know Sir William, but she knew the groom, and guessed who it was.

"Mrs. Reade, I believe."

"That is my name, sir. Will you walk in?"

"Thank you." He stepped into a little low-ceilinged room, almost too damply and shiningly clean to be comfortable.

"I hope you'll excuse being kept at the door, sir; it's washing-day with me, and my daughter's out."

"Your daughter Janet, Mrs. Reade?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, I saw her at Croxham church to-day, and heard her sing. You have reason to be very proud of your daughter's voice," said he, looking at her very intently as he spoke.

She seemed rather surprised, as he expected. "My Janet's, sir! Well, it's none so much to boast of. There's many better voices than hers in the choir; not but what it's nice enough as far as it goes, but you can't hardly hear it a few pews off."

"Indeed! I heard a beautiful voice in the church this afternoon; I asked the name of the singer, and was told it was Janet Reade."

The woman looked puzzled. "You are very good, I'm sure, sir; but I don't think it could have been my Janet's voice that you heard."

"Has your daughter been to the church this afternoon?"

"Not that I know of, sir. They've had a half-holiday at the school, and Janet was going up to the Abbey with some work she's been doing for Miss Dixon. I expected her home before this."

"I wonder whose voice it could have been? Who is considered the best singer about here: do you know?"

"Well, let me think," said Mrs. Reade. "Polly Ricketts has

about the most voice, I think, sir, though when she sings high she's a bit squeaky, and she don't keep in tune very well. But she has a good strong voice; I'm sure it goes through your head if you're too close to her."

"Well, I don't think it could have been hers," remarked Sir William. "Are there not any ladies about here who—who go sometimes into the church to sing?"

"Not that I know of, sir. The Miss Thornhills, I b'lieve they go into it to practise. Miss Anson, the curate's daughter, she sings in the choir on Sunday, but she is away from Croxham all the week, teaching in a gentleman's family. Stay, though," added Mrs. Reade, pausing to call up a memory: "I think I did hear that for the last Sunday or two there had been a fresh voice, quite beautiful, helping in the choir. Yes, I'm sure I did; some lady staying in the place for a little while. What was her name now?"

"Try and recollect it," cried Sir William, eagerly.

"If I can, sir. Bell, was it?—Well yes, sir, I do think it was. Mrs. Bell, sir. Any way, it was some short name like that."

"*She* would not be here in her own name," thought Sir William. "'Bell' would serve as well as any other. Perhaps your daughter may be able to tell me, Mrs. Reade," he said aloud. "I much wish to know. I am Sir William Hunt."

"If she can, she will, and welcome, Sir William. She won't be many minutes now, I expect, if you'll just not mind waiting a little." She gave him the wooden arm-chair with its faded patchwork cushion, and before long the door opened, and the girl who had passed him in the porch came in.

The chair on which he was sitting had its back to the window, and was sheltered from the draught by a screen, formed of a clothes-horse, with an old table-cover tacked on to it; so that as she ran in, excited and somewhat breathless, Janet did not see the stranger.

"Oh, mother, I've got such a lot to tell you," she burst out. "Such queer things have been happening to-day. I don't know what's come to the place—or the people. First you must know ——"

"Hush, lass, this gentleman here wants to see you," interrupted the mother, in a low voice of warning, as she looked towards the screen.

The Baronet rose, startling Janet. The agitation depicted in his face, in his whole frame, when he had confronted Janet in the church porch, and put out his hand authoritatively, as if to arrest her, had scared her then. First she thought he was ill; next, that she had done something wrong, for which she was going to be punished: and she had made off with speed. The sight of him again, in her mother's cottage, gave her a shock, and she stood nervously before him, after dropping a curtsey, as much perplexed by his unexpected appearance as she had been by Miss Dixon's abrupt departure at the church, and by Mr. Godfrey Mayne's disturbed manner

"The gentleman wants to know if you were up at the church to-day, Janet," continued her mother.

"Oh, I am satisfied on that point already," said he, smiling reassuringly as he saw the effect the sight of him had upon the girl. "I met you coming out of the church, did I not?"

"Yes, sir," said Janet.

"And the gentleman wants to know who it was singing," added Mrs. Reade.

Janet looked up at him and saw how deep his anxiety on the point was, and she did not at once answer. Something was evidently wrong. After a moment's consideration, during which she could see that his hungry eagerness for her reply grew every moment keener, she spoke.

"Didn't you see her go out through the porch just before me, sir?"

"No; no one came out. Mr. Godfrey Mayne went in, and soon after you came through, but not anyone else."

Janet was a sharp lass. Why was he asking this?—why did the gentleman want to know? The girl had shrewd insight, and she immediately began to think that all this might bode ill to her good friend Miss Dixon. Perhaps the young lady had been at the organ without permission, and was going to be called to account for it? Well, she, Janet, would baffle them if she could.

"You were blowing, were you not?" said Sir William.

"Yes, sir."

"Who was it for?"

"A stranger," boldly replied the girl, for whose veracity the Reverend Mr. Anson had been ready to speak. "Some lady came up to me in the church avenue this afternoon, and asked would I go into the church and blow for her: she wanted to try the organ, she said."

"But don't you know who the lady was."

"No, sir. I went in with her as she asked me, and when she had finished the piece she sang, she got up, and I suppose she went away, for I did not see any more of her. Mr. Godfrey Mayne, he came in then; I asked him where the lady was, and he said she was gone."

Miss Janet related all this—which was partly true and partly not—with so glib and ready a tongue that she evidently had the making in her of a very correct young woman. The Baronet looked at her searchingly.

"Do you not know the lady's name?"

"I might have heard it, sir; I don't remember."

"Is she young, or old?"

Janet reflected. "Well—maybe—thirty, or so."

"Janet's not to be depended on one bit, sir, when it comes to the judging of age," put in Mrs. Reade. "A person that she'll call thirty is as likely to be not more than twenty, or just the other way—a good forty. Janet, child, was it that lady who has been stopping in the

place for a week or two, and sang at church one Sunday? I can't call her name to mind for certain—unless it's Bell."

"Perhaps it was her," replied Janet.

"But you'd know her, shouldn't you?" said Mrs. Reade quickly. "A nice-looking lady in puce silk, who was lodging somewhere in the village for a week or so, 'twas said."

Janet telegraphed to her mother a warning look to be quiet. Sir William observed it. He thought the girl must be afraid of him, and afraid to answer.

"The voice I heard in the church this afternoon was much like that of a lady I met abroad, but whom I have not seen for a long time; I thought it might be the same," he explained, to put Janet at her ease. "That is why I am asking you. Did you not hear how beautiful the voice was?"

"Yes, I did, sir. I thought I had never heard such a voice."

"Did you never hear her sing before?"

"No, sir; never."

"But did she never ask you to blow for her before, Janet?" put in Mrs. Reade.

"No, mother, she never did."

"And can't you tell, child, whether, the name was Mrs. Bell?"

"I can't tell a bit," replied Janet, dogged obstinacy in her tone.

Sir William saw clearly he should get no satisfactory information here; and he went away from the cottage with an impression that the girl was purposely withholding it.

Determined to find out more for himself if possible, he walked slowly down the road in thought, signing to the groom to follow with the horses. Some way onward, he met two little girls in pinafores and sun bonnets; they looked tidy, and Sir William judged rightly that they belonged to the school. He stopped and questioned them, patting them in a pleasant, fatherly manner.

"Does Janet Reade go to school," he asked.

"Yes, but she's one of the big ones," answered the elder of them, a child of seven.

"I wonder if I've got a halfpenny about me?" said the Baronet. "Do you like gingerbread, little ones?"

The sparkling young eyes answered him, without words.

"Did you happen to see Janet Reade go into the church this afternoon?" he continued, diving in his pockets.

"Yes," spoke up one of the eager children. "Janet went in there with the White Witch."

"With the—who did you say?" questioned Sir William, not quite catching the words. "Was it a lady that Janet went in with?"

"It was the White Witch," repeated the child.

"The White Witch? Why, what's that? There; there's a halfpenny apiece for you. And now tell me what you mean by the White Witch."

"She's the White Witch," again said the child.

Sir William paused. "Is she a lady?"

"Yes."

"Who is she? Where does she live?"

"She lives at the Abbey."

"At the Abbey!" cried Sir William, feeling all abroad. "Why do you call her by that name—the White Witch?"

"'Cause she is. We see her all in white up at the Abbey the day o' the storm. She frightened us all."

"Do you know her name, children?"

"No, sir," answered the child.

"And you saw her go into the church this afternoon with Janet Reade?"

"I see her: they went in along o' one another."

At that moment the little curate came out of a cottage hard by, where he had been paying a pastoral visit. Sir William turned to him; while the children, making use of the opportunity, tore away in the direction of the gingerbread shop, as if a mad bull were after them.

"Can you explain to me what on earth those little ones mean, Mr. Anson?" questioned the Baronet. "I was asking them about a lady who went into the church to sing to the organ this afternoon, and they call her the White Witch."

"Silly little geese!" exclaimed Mr. Anson, with a passing laugh, as he went on to explain to Sir William that it was Miss Dixon they had alluded to, and how the name had been earned.

"She is indeed a white witch; a lovely and a charming one," added the curate in the honest admiration of his heart. "Miss Dixon has won her way with us all, Sir William, high and low."

Sir William seemed to see less solution to his doubts than before. This young lady, Mr. Mayne's step-daughter, could not have anything to do with the one he was striving to discover. For the first time he asked himself whether he could have been mistaken in supposing that the voice in the church was the voice that had so long haunted his memory.

"Does Miss Dixon sing, do you know?" he abruptly asked.

"I think not," replied the Curate; "I never heard that she did."

"Do you chance to know anything of a Mrs. Bell—or some such name—who does sing; and who is, I hear, staying at Croxham?"

"Bell?—Bell?" repeated the Curate, reflecting. "There was a lady here for a week or two, and I think that was her name. I don't know anything of her. She is now gone, I believe."

Sir William thanked the little man, mounted his horse, and rode away in the direction of the Abbey. He thought that Miss Dixon, whom he did not suspect of being the singer herself, might have seen the singer in the church. If it should turn out that Miss Dixon was the singer, of course it would be a proof that he was mistaken in thinking it to be the voice he had heard at Rome. It was getting

rather late to make a call; but Sir William was impatient, and he and Mr. Mayne had been friends too long to stand upon ceremony with one another. So he spurred his horse onwards.

He had just passed a turning in the road which brought him to the foot of a gentle rise called Croxham Hill, when he saw, somewhat to his surprise, his own carriage speeding down it. Sir William checked his horse, and waited until it came up.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BAFFLED.

Sir William signed to the coachman to stop; and Lady Hunt, who was alone in the carriage, looked out to see what was the matter. The first glance at her husband's face showed her that something was wrong.

"What is it, William? What has happened?"

"Nothing. I only stopped to tell you that I may not be home quite so early as usual. I am going to call at the Abbey."

"At the Abbey? Now? Where have you been? You said when you started you were going to call at the Abbey then."

"Yes: but in passing the church it occurred to me that I had promised to go in and hear the new organ, so I thought I might as well go then; I might not again have so good an opportunity; and I left my horse with James, and walked to it, trusting to my luck to see Godfrey Mayne about, or perhaps one of the Thornhill girls, to play it for me."

"And did your luck serve you?" enquired Lady Hunt, with a smile.

"Yes, so far," he replied gravely. "I came upon Godfrey in the churchyard."

"And what do you think of it?—He played for you?"

"No."

"How mysterious you are! William, I know what it is!" she suddenly cried. "When you look in this solemn way, you are sure to be thinking of that past trouble. Have you heard anything fresh?"

Sir William bent down to put his head inside the carriage-window, and answered in a cautious whisper. "I think I have. Harriet, I think I have heard this afternoon in Croxham Church the very self-same voice that lured our boy to his dreadful end."

Lady Hunt flung her hands up before her face. "Oh William, how can you? These fancies are getting to be quite a mania. First, you see a face in a shop ——"

Sir William withdrew his head; signed to his groom to come up to take his horse, and to the footman to open the carriage door. "Let the carriage walk about quietly," he said to the latter, as he took his seat opposite to his wife, and bent towards her.

"I tell you, Harriet, it is neither fancy nor mania," he said, impressively, as the coachman began, in obedience to orders, to walk his horses up and down. "I have heard a woman sing this afternoon to the organ in Croxham church, and from my soul I believe it to be the same woman I heard sing that time in Rome. It was the same song, 'Angels, ever bright and fair:' the very same."

"And its being the same song, must have misled you," reasoned Lady Hunt. "You have never heard the song since, for you have kept yourself out of the way of singing, and hearing it now must have given rise to the notion that it was the same singer. What was the woman of this afternoon like?"

"I did not see her." Bending closer, until his face nearly touched his wife's, Sir William gave her a brief history of the events. It but confirmed Lady Hunt in her opinion—that her husband's fancy had misled him into the belief he took up, and that the singer had been but an ordinary singer, probably the girl he mentioned, Janet Reade.

"William, do give up this endeavour to rake up the old story and making yourself miserable and everybody else uncomfortable, all to no purpose!" she cried. "You can't bring the poor boy to life again; and what good can revenge do you?"

"As much as a season in town, or any of the things which in your idea make life worth living, can do you," he rejoined. "I have lived for nothing else for these few past years, and I am not going to let my chance slip now."

Poor little Lady Hunt looked exceedingly miserable and rather frightened, as she glanced at her husband's stern, grave face.

"I regretted and mourned our boy just as much as you did, William; you know that; and the manner of his death overwhelmed me with a feeling of horror which I have never quite got over. I shrink from its being renewed now; shrink from it with a dread that you can hardly understand. If you would but spare me!"

"My dear Harriet, if I thought there was anything to spare you from, I would do it," he answered. "But there really is not. The investigation will not touch you in the least."

"I have always thought that the matter was unpardonably mismanaged at the time, or the people would have been taken then," she said.

"The people were cunning, and escaped."

"Yes; but they should not have been let escape. Still, as that was so, better let it rest now, for good and all."

"You know, Harriet, that ever since that time of their escape and our useless search after them, I have been trying to track those people," he persisted. "Never once, in all this weary time, have I come upon the slightest trace of them until within the last week or two. Now the traces seem to be opening out. And you would have me abandon it altogether!"

"I would. I feel that it will bring I know not what of trouble.

If it would restore our boy to life only for an hour, I would not object; I should be as eager for their discovery as you are. But it will not; you know it will not. And I do believe it is only your fancy. Oh William, if you would but indulge me in this—and not send to Scotland Yard!"

"Why, I have sent," he returned quickly. "You are forgetting. My letter went up days and days ago." And Lady Hunt turned her face aside from his gaze, and tapped her foot petulantly upon the carriage mat.

"Think how unpleasant it will be for us to have the household upset by London police officers, and the servants thinking of nothing but mysteries, and screaming, and paying no attention to one's orders! It will bear quite a disreputable appearance to have detectives about us, William! What will the neighbours say?"

"Well, it seems hopeless to get you out of looking upon it in this foolish light," sighed Sir William. "See here, Harriet: I will write up to Scotland Yard this evening, and tell them not to let the man they send down present himself at the Park. He can put up at the King's Arms at Cheston, and I will go to him there."

"No, William, don't do that," she said in quick alarm; "don't write up to the place again: let it be. But what is it that is taking you to the Abbey now?"

"I thought you understood. If Mrs. Mayne's daughter was in the church this afternoon, she may have seen the singer, and be able to tell me who she is, and what she's like. Some person calling herself Mrs. Bell has been staying at Croxham; it may be she."

Pulling the check-string, for the carriage to stop, Sir William left it, got upon his horse, and continued his way to the Abbey. As he cantered up the avenue, he saw a girl running across the long meadow, also making for the Abbey. He had time to recognise Janet Reade, and the sight of her confirmed his suspicion that she was in some way keeping him in the dark. A thought darted into his mind—was the person who had been at the organ, who had that glorious voice, staying at the Abbey; some temporary visitor? And was this the reason that Godfrey, perhaps in pure boyish mischief, had tried to mystify him?

Miss Dixon's manner to her inferiors and to children was especially charming. Not with the soft, subtle charm that distinguished Mrs. Mayne's; Mary's was the innate, genuine, and loving sympathy that wins its way to all hearts. She had gained those of the school-children: they might call her from custom the White Witch yet, but it was a witch they admired and adored. Janet Reade loved her more than anybody else in the world. Miss Dixon had stood up for Janet in a trouble the girl had brought upon herself at school, and had contrived to rectify it without exposure, and Janet overflowed with devotional gratitude. When Janet was on her way to the Abbey that afternoon to take home some needlework she had been doing, and Miss Dixon

met her in the church avenue and asked her if she would go into the church and blow the organ for her for half an hour, the girl was ready and willing. Afterwards, upon the conclusion of Sir William Hunt's visit to her mother's cottage, Janet, believing that his cross-questioning must arise from Miss Dixon's having played the new organ without leave, started away by a side route to the Abbey, to crave an audience of the young lady and inform her of what had occurred.

As the girl made for the back entrance, Sir William got off his horse at the front. Mr. Mayne was in the garden, his fresh, healthy face glowing in the red light of the sun, now nearing its setting. The two old friends met cordially.

"Called to see Mary! To be sure, Hunt. Come in; come in. She is in the drawing-room, and she shall fetch my wife down," reiterated Mr. Mayne.

Godfrey, as already told, came rushing into the hall from the direction of the refectory; but not in time to arrest the opening of the drawing-room door. Indeed, how could he have done it?

"Halloa, Mary's not here!" cried Mr. Mayne. "Nobody's here. Walk in, Hunt."

Godfrey shook hands with Sir William effusively, as if he had not seen him for years, instead of having left him, an hour or so ago, rather offended, at the end of the Church Avenue. The young man was off his head with joy and relief, at finding that Mary was not visible. Sir William, on the other hand, was cold and grave.

"I wonder where they've got to?" Mr. Mayne went on. "My wife was lying down, but I should think she is up now: Mary must be with her. Run up, Godfrey, and ask them both to come down; tell them Sir William is here."

"Pray don't disturb Mrs. Mayne on my account," said Sir William. "I have been rather unlucky in not making her acquaintance yet; but you must not disturb her for me."

"Nonsense; it will rouse her and do her good," said Mr. Mayne briskly. "I think ladies fall ill to vary the monotony of life in the country; I do, indeed; it is a bad habit, and we ought not to encourage it."

"Does Miss Dixon sing?" asked Sir William.

"Sing?" Mr. Mayne echoed, rather wondering at the abrupt question. "No. I have never heard Mary sing in all my life. Why?"

"I heard a voice in the church this afternoon. I thought perhaps it was Miss Dixon's."

"Oh no; she does not sing. Godfrey, why don't you go?" repeated Mr. Mayne, for the young man had disregarded the previous injunction. "My wife has not quite got over the indisposition that prevented her from going to your house last night, Hunt, but I'm sure she will come down to see you."

Godfrey moved lazily towards the door. "Shall we see you and

Lady Hunt at the Underwoods' ball to-morrow night, Sir William?" he asked.

"No; my wife has declined," replied Sir William. "We expect Eustace home to-morrow, ill, and she will not leave him. As for me, I no longer take pleasure in balls. You are all going, I suppose?"

"I believe so," replied Godfrey.

There was a moment's silence. Sir William glanced at the clock.

"Godfrey, unless you go and see after them, I shall," said his father: which sent the young man from the room.

Godfrey made his way to the schoolroom, determined to tell Mary who it was that wanted her, and then to let her use her own discretion about appearing. If she declined, he would carry back some plausible plea of excuse to Sir William. Knocking at the door, and getting no answer, he turned the handle and looked in. A girl was standing at one of the windows, and he saw that it was Janet Reade. She curtseyed to him, but looked confused, and said nothing.

"Did you not go home when I saw you leave the church, Janet?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"And you have come back here since! What is it that you have come for?" he continued, suspicious and curious.

"I—I came to speak to Miss Dixon, sir."

"Have you seen her?"

"Yes, she has," interrupted Mary, as she opened the door of her own room and came out, white to the lips. But her disordered hair had been re-arranged and the tear-stains on her cheeks washed away. "Janet has seen me, and I have now done with her.—I am much obliged to you, Janet; you need not wait. I shall see you to-morrow."

The girl left the room, curtseying to them both. Mary turned to Godfrey, trying to speak in her usual manner.

"Why do you look so—so put out?"

"Oh, it's nothing," he replied. "Are you going down?"—for she was turning to the door. "There is some one in the drawing-room."

"Yes," said she, with a steadfast face, but in which he read a resolution of despair. "Sir William Hunt, is it not?"

"It is."

"He must have come straight here from Janet Reade's."

"From Janet Reade's!" repeated Godfrey.

"Yes. He has been making enquiries of her there about—about the owner of my voice. I must—I suppose—satisfy him."

"No, no!" said Godfrey, warmly; "you shall not see him, or satisfy him either, if you do not wish to. You think, I expect, that it was Sir William who looked at you through the vestry window, but I can assure you that it was not. I have found out who it was."

Mary gazed at him, her eyes wild with fear.

"Don't look like that," he said, wondering at her terror, yet believing it must arise from the nervousness left by the fright in the afternoon. "It was only that artist who is lodging at the Wildings': an idle scamp of a fellow, according to Nancy. I found his sketch-book lying on the grass in the churchyard: a pretty sure proof that it was he. I took it to the farm to give back to him."

"You saw him, then?" asked Mary, as she rallied her courage.

"No; he was writing letters. I think he guessed what I had come to say to him. I shall give him a strong hint that he had better check his prying propensities."

"Don't do that," said she, quietly. "It must have been a mere freak of idle curiosity, nothing more: anybody has a right to look through a church window. It was extremely foolish of me to be startled. I did not even see him, or what he was like. All I saw was a man's hat and grey hair suddenly appear above the window-sill; and then I thought I heard myself called to, which must have been imagination ——"

"Of course it was," interrupted Godfrey.

"Yes. You had frightened me, to begin with, by locking me into the vestry in that sudden manner, and I suppose this other fright, coming upon that, overweighted me, and caused me to faint. Pray do not reprove the man: it would be turning a trifle into a matter of importance."

"Very well; perhaps you are right; and I will hand his sketch-book over to Nancy. Have you met this artist about the place?" added Godfrey, recalling what Nancy had told him about Miss Dixon's likeness.

"Not that I know of," she replied. "I don't care to meet strangers about the fields. If I see one coming I turn another way."

"Quite right."

"Now I come to think of it, I may have seen him," resumed Mary. "Yesterday, when I was walking out with your father, we met a man in the corn-field. It did not occur to me to think it was the artist, but it may have been. I noticed that he looked at us both very attentively while he was at a distance, and turned his head away while he passed us. I wonder if it was he?"

"What was he like?"

"A shortish man. At least he looked short, compared with Mr. Mayne. He had a lot of grey hair and, I think, grey whiskers. But, seeing that it was nobody I knew, I did not take much notice of him. He was rather big about the shoulders."

"Well, that's not at all a bad description of the artist," remarked Godfrey. "No doubt it was he. Was it the same man whose head appeared at the window this afternoon?"

"I cannot say. I hardly saw that man at all. He did not look like anyone I knew. It was the suddenness of the head's appearing

there, and fancying I heard my name, that startled me. And now," added Mary, "I will go down stairs to be introduced to Sir William."

She was passing outside. Godfrey arrested her.

"No, no, pray do not: if you would rather avoid him."

"Why should I avoid him?" she sharply retorted, as one in pain: and she walked swiftly along the gallery.

At that moment, Mrs. Mayne's door opened, and the sweep of her silk gown was heard passing towards the head of the staircase. "Mamma! mamma!" called out Mary, in a covert tone of terror.

"Let your mother go down," whispered Godfrey. He was wonderfully curious to see the meeting between Mrs. Mayne and Sir William.

Mary's face was quite convulsed with fear. "Mamma, mamma, come back," she cried; and, breaking from Godfrey's detaining hand, she flew to her mother, who had descended a step or two, and caught forcible hold of her.

Mrs. Mayne turned her head. "Why, what is it, Mary?" she cried, seeing the startled face of her daughter, and the impassive one of Godfrey. "I am only going to the drawing-room for some tea," she added, tranquilly. "I have been having a nice long sleep and feel ever so much better."

"Don't go—you must not go," pleaded the girl. "Some one is there."

The drawing-room door was opening; and now the elder lady took fright in earnest. Mr. Mayne was coming in search of her. She wheeled round too quickly, and perhaps the clinging grasp of Mary somewhat impeded her movements, and she uttered a faint cry. Mrs. Mayne had twisted her foot.

Godfrey helped her back to her room; Mary followed, wringing her hands. Mr. Mayne arrived to hear of, almost to have witnessed the disaster. After expressing his sorrow, he went back to Sir William.

"She was in the very act of coming down on purpose to see you," said Mr. Mayne, catching up the version he had received, and explaining his wife's mishap. "It is very unfortunate, Hunt: just as if fate were putting a veto against your meeting."

"I am truly sorry," said Sir William, unsuspiciously. "I shall not, then, see Miss Dixon either?"

"Not to-day; she is with her mother," interposed Godfrey. "Another time, Sir William."

Sir William Hunt, saying good-bye, went out to his horse, and rode away, baffled. By "Fate," or by Mrs. Mayne.

(To be continued.)

PERSONAL EQUATIONS.

IN astronomy the small corrections which must be made to secure accurate predictions are called equations. One of these corrections depends on the difference in the observing power of different individuals. One man will note with more accuracy than another the precise moment when any phenomenon occurs. After all corrections are made to the fact seen, another must be added, on account of peculiarity in the person seeing it. This is called the personal equation.

But a personal equation is not to be allowed for merely in reference to astronomical calculations.

Every man has a favourite point of view from which he sees things. We see but what we bring with us—the power of seeing; and this power is hampered by preoccupation and prejudices of all kinds. Two persons looking at the same object may carry away perfectly different, and even opposite, impressions. Ask one who has been looking into the window of a shop containing a large assortment of miscellaneous articles what he has seen, and the answer given will reveal a good deal as to the profession, character, and tastes of the person interrogated. So, too, in walking through a picture gallery, people only stop in front of the pictures that suit themselves.

Several travellers, journeying together, reach the summit of a hill and look down into a valley stretching far away before them. One is an artist and he sees the picturesque character of the scene. He notices lights and shadows; lovely streaks of sunshine on the green meadow; black shadows on the hills. Another is a wood-cutter. He notices the timber, and can tell you its quality and value. A third is a geologist, and he sees the stratification of the rocks, the terraces deposited by the retiring waters, or marks of glacial action. A fourth is a general, and he notices at a glance the strategic points, the commanding summits, the opportunities for moving cavalry and infantry. Still another is an historian, and to him the landscape is living with recollections of the past. Meantime, the horses of these travellers notice nothing but the grass. A lady and a clergyman are looking at the moon together. "The figure in the moon," suggests the clergyman, "seems to me to resemble the spire of a cathedral!" "How strange," replies the lady, "for to me there appears to be in the moon two figures. One is like a lover bending over his lady-love." The personal equation of each of these persons suggested their respective visions.

Almost everything has a pleasant as well as an unpleasant side, and it is possible for everyone to acquire the habit—which, according to

Dr. Johnson, is worth ten thousand a-year—of looking at the bright side of things. Well for ourselves and friends if our personal equation have acquired a bent in this direction. Many persons, in travelling, seem bent on seeing only what is disagreeable. On the same trip you may meet both classes of travellers. One is complaining of the dust, the noise, the disagreeable people. Another cannot go half a dozen miles without meeting some agreeable companion or some interesting adventure. We once travelled with an old bachelor who was much disappointed with the Alps. Why? He saw them not! for he was thinking of, and boring us about, those pills he had forgotten in Paris! So it is, that however lovely nature may be around us, and however happy the circumstances of our lives ought to make us,

> 'We receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does nature live."

All depends on the attitude of our mind and heart; in a word, upon our personal equation.

The pessimist believes that "it is better to stand than to walk; better to sit than to stand; better to lie down than to sit; better to sleep than to wake; better is a dreamless sleep than dreams; death is better than even a dreamless sleep; and never to have been is the best of all." Another man with less reason in the outward circumstances of his life, is led by his personal equation to become an optimist. He takes a rose-water view of everything, believes that this is the best of all possible worlds, and returns daily thanks for his creation.

"To see is to have," says a French proverb. The owner of an estate may not be its real possessor; for he may be unable to enjoy it. A millionnaire pays thousands of pounds for a gallery of paintings, and some boy or girl comes in, with open mind and poetic fancy, and carries away a treasure of beauty which the owner never saw. All depends upon personal equation. True happiness comes from with-

and not from without. It is made, not found.

A STUDENT.

"MY DEAR COUSIN HOWARD,—I hear from Alice that you are about to leave your lodging on the moor, and from her description of the place I think it would suit me perfectly. I want a *very* quiet house with no other lodger. I must read hard during July and August.

"I have just got a splendid vertical section of the petal of the *digitalis purpurea*, and I am quite sure you are right about the total cessation of activity in the chlorophyll before the appearance of the pigment. However, Dr. Bond maintains his own opinion still.

"Will you arrange for me to take your rooms, if you think they will suit? I should like to go down on Thursday.

"Ever your affectionate cousin,

"F. EVELYN."

"Hum!" said Mr. Evelyn, as he cracked his egg and finished this epistle. "The place is quiet enough; only what is up now, I wonder? 'Read hard'— always the way. Well, I'll take the rooms—I'm sorry enough to leave them myself."

He looked through the quaint, diamond-paned window out on the wide stretch of rugged moor, the free far-reaching sweep of heather-clad earth and lichened stone; and sighed to think that to-morrow he must leave the lonely majesty of this quiet place for the civilised noisy dulness of his London chambers.

"Mrs. Peters," he called, hearing a step in the passage.

"Yes, sir," answered his landlady, opening the door. "Good-morning, sir."

"A beautiful morning, Mrs. Peters. It makes me hate to go back to London, and leave such weather behind."

"Indeed, sir, I'd be sorry for anyone to stop enjoying themselves; and if you like to stay, why, the rooms b'aint taken yet."

"Ah! I wish I could. But I want to engage the rooms, Mrs. Peters, if you've no objection. A young cousin of mine, a great student, wants to come down here for July and August. I suppose you have no one in view—what has happened to Mr. Anson?"

"He's gone to Switzerland, sir, I think. Anyway, he hasn't taken the rooms this summer, I'm sorry to say. But for any friend of yours, Mr. Evelyn, I'll do my best, and I can say no more."

"Well, my cousin authorises me to take the rooms if you can give them. Let me see: I leave to-morrow. Could you have the rooms ready by Thursday?"

"Certainly, sir, and I'm obliged to you."

"Then I'll be back about four, and I shall be pretty hungry, Mrs. Peters. You won't forget to tell Jack about my portmanteau?"

"That will be all right, sir."

So Mr. Evelyn donned a light overcoat and a broad-brimmed hat, and equipped with tin box and umbrella went forth for his last botanical ramble on Dartmoor.

Mrs. Peters returned to her kitchen with a light heart, for she was burdened with a rheumatic husband, and their income from the little farm was so small that she was much beholden for winter maintenance to the sum she earned by letting her two best rooms in the summer months. But Chagleigh was far from any town and bordered the wildest part of the moor, and these circumstances, which lent it great attractions in Mr. Evelyn's eyes, hindered less retiring visitors from taking up their abode at the farm-house.

"Thomas, there's a young gentleman, a cousin of Mr. Evelyn's, coming down to take the rooms. He's a great student, and he'll stay for two months!"

"Hope a'll pay ef a's a book-larned lad," growled ungrateful Thomas.

"Now, Thomas Peters, I'm ashamed! Instead of kneeling down —well, that you can't do, poor dear—but thanking the good Lord. Of course he'll pay!"

"An how's Maister Hanson to stop yere too, then?" continued ungrateful Thomas, as a shadow darkened the doorway. "For yere he be!"

"Mr. Anson, my dear!" cried Mrs. Peters, staring aghast at the new-comer. "Wherever did you come from? To think of it! If I ever thought you were coming here this day! How did you come, sir?"

"Why, I walked over from Teighmoor this morning, Mrs. Peters," replied Mr. Anson. "Didn't you get a letter from me a week ago?" And he seated himself on the kitchen settle with the air of one who knew he was welcome.

"Never heard a word about you, sir, since Mrs. Bayle told me you were going to Switzerland."

"Well, old Martin must have the letter in his hat or one of his pockets then, for I wrote several days ago. But I hope you can take me in?"

Mrs. Peters did not usually speak with a Devon accent. But none but a genuine daughter of Devon could have put as much dismay and grief into a single syllable as she did.

"My *de*—ar! Whatever shall we do? Only this very morning I let the rooms to a gentleman from up the country, thinking you weren't coming."

"That's bad—for me," returned Mr. Anson. "But I suppose what must be, must be."

"No, Mr. Anson, it mus'n't. I'll tell Mr. Evelyn the gentleman can't have them. You have the best right, sure."

"You had better take in the stranger, I think. I am at best only an uncertain bird. Take him in and do for him, Mrs. Peters: I'll go over to Teighmoor again till I find a place."

"Dear, dear! You must be nearly starved. I'll get you some breakfast first, and then I'll step over to Mrs. Blake's and see what sort of accommodation she's got. Would you like to try her, Mr. Anson? I hear she's a clean, thrifty body."

"Aye, if she could have me. I really don't care where my tent is pitched—only that I would rather be here. But I don't believe Mrs. Blake's heavy-cake can come up to yours, Mrs. Peters."

"Well, she's a tidy body and does her best," said the gratified hostess, generously. "And if you are not comfortable, you've only to tell me, and I'll find you a place you'll like. I was beginning to think this new young gentleman would be company for you, but I don't know."

"I'll come and see what he's like, anyhow. If he doesn't want society we shall easily find it out. I dare say he doesn't, coming down here."

At this moment the cart carrying Mr. Anson's luggage from Teighmoor came into the yard. It was discovered that a portable easel was missing, and as the boy declared he had brought every article he received, there was nothing for it but that Mr. Anson should set out again after breakfast, and walk the seven miles to Teighmoor.

"I'll call at Mrs. Blake's on my way, Mrs. Peters," said he. "Meanwhile, the luggage can remain here, if you will be so good. Tell Mr. Evelyn I was sorry not to meet him. I shall sleep at Teighmoor to-night." And away went the young artist over the moor.

Mrs. Blake had rooms at Mr. Anson's disposal; Mrs. Blake promised to do her best for the young gentleman; and Mr. Anson took up his abode in her dwelling, about a mile from his old quarters at Chagleigh Farm.

II.

THE Wednesday intervening between Mr. Evelyn's departure and the arrival of his cousin, was occupied by Mrs. Peters in cleansing as thoroughly as possible the apparently spotless furniture, and in making other preparations for her new guest. She confided to her husband a sort of dislike to the young man, and several times expressed her sorrow that she was not getting the apartments ready for Mr. Anson. For three summers he had spent July under her roof, but some uncertainty as to his movements had now unfortunately arisen, and she was compelled to send him away.

For all her vexation, she surveyed with much pleasure the neat rooms that shone with hand polish on wood and metal, as she awaited the arrival of the stranger.

"He can't say they're not clean, anyhow," was her satisfied comment.

The sound of wheels drew her to the door; whence, however, after one brief glance she suddenly retreated, and much surprised her husband by rushing into the kitchen and exclaiming:

"Land's sake alive, Thomas! The new young gentleman's *a lady!*"

"Yes, I like the lodgings very much," said Miss Evelyn pleasantly, when Mrs. Peters brought up the tea that was to have regailed the imaginary young gentleman. "But I find the windows do not open at the bottom. How do you ventilate the rooms?"

"Mr. Evelyn used to have them just as they are, miss," answered Mrs. Peters, a little hurt. "He never complained."

"Oh, then, never mind; I dare say I can manage." And the young lady smiled so brightly that Mrs. Peters left the room with a less wrathful heart than she had borne during the interview. But she told her husband that Miss Evelyn was full of whims and fancies; and she for one didn't want to have the house blown out of window by draughts; adding several other remarks which showed that the lady-lodger was not likely to become such a favourite with the good woman as her cousin had been.

The next morning Miss Evelyn unpacked a very heavy box, which proved to be nearly full of books. These she established in rows on the only table, and in answer to Mrs. Peters' puzzled request for a place on which to lay the cloth, she cleared about two feet square, and intimated that not another inch could be appropriated for any purpose whatever. Several photographs in light frames were scattered about the room, and a gay Indian shawl was spread, in a fantastic manner, over the low, broad window seat. An easy chair which had arrived with the luggage stood by the window, and a reading-easel was placed in front of it. The little room, though with such slight touches, was completely transformed, and the most effective object in it was its occupant, whose personal appearance shall be described later on.

"I should like to have dinner every day at one o'clock, Mrs. Peters, and tea at five. Then I shall not require anything more from you till breakfast time. And I should like breakfast not later than eight."

Mrs. Peters was half inclined to reply that Mr. Evelyn never required his breakfast till half-past nine, but a glance at the calm face "took it out" of her, as she told her husband. She was an excellent cook, but she disliked being tied to time, and the idea of a lady's arranging things in this manner was rather distasteful to her.

Meanwhile the young artist made himself very comfortable at Mrs. Blake's, as was his custom wherever he located himself. He was as fond of fishing as of painting, and he spent many hours by the trout-stream, looking for "effects," he said; though his effects were mostly in the shape of the shining beauties with which he not infrequently filled his basket.

He was of an imaginative turn of mind, and amused himself, during the lonely hours of his first days on the moor, by speculations about the man who had so suddenly usurped his rooms at Chagleigh. He sketched several interviews, during which he and the student became fast friends, and his lively invention had surrounded the unknown with a halo of romance as he decided to send the spoils of the day to Mrs. Peters, with a request that she would cook them for the evening meal of her guest. So it happened that when Miss Evelyn sat down to tea, half-an-hour after her arrival at the farmhouse, some delicious trout appeared on the table. Mrs. Peters, in her "flustrification," as she afterwards explained, forgot to mention the donor, and so the young artist's gift was not received with the gratitude he intended it to inspire.

"I shouldn't ask for a more delicate attention," said he, as he looked lovingly at the gift before sending it, "than four fine trout. And very probably he won't care about pleasures of the appetite."

I am bound to say, however, that the recipient much enjoyed a part of the present, and wondered if Mrs. Peters could possibly make her lodgings pay, providing such delicacies for her guests.

III.

On the second day after Miss Evelyn's arrival, Harry Anson determined to pay a visit to the student.

"I'll talk about old Evelyn," said the cheerful youth to himself, as he walked through the heather and bracken to the farm. "I dare say he's nervous; reading men always are. There was Lynch of Balliol. How he shook when a fellow spoke to him! But I'll be very free-and-easy; that's what shy fellows like; and I'll tell him I loved his cousin like a father. I wonder how he spends his time. I mustn't let him sit over his books. It would be a sin, on this moor and in this weather. Well, here goes." And he opened the wooden gate of the farmyard.

Now, Mrs. Peters rarely left the farm, especially in the evenings; but on this particular evening she was anxious to attend a meeting held in a small Methodist chapel, about a mile off. So having filled her husband's pipe, and ascertained that Miss Evelyn wanted nothing, she set off, leaving the lodger in her own room, writing a letter, and her husband in his customary arm-chair by the kitchen fire.

Thomas was sleeping peacefully when Harry Anson arrived; so the artist, who was quite at home at Chagleigh, went quietly through the

kitchen, and ascending the little stairs, knocked at the door he had so often called his own.

"Come in," said a clear voice.

He obeyed, saying pleasantly, "I trust you will not think ——" and there stopped.

On the way to Chagleigh, Harry Anson had quite determined on the main features of the student's appearance. He had gifted Mrs. Peters' lodger with a tall, stooping figure, a sallow complexion, hollow eyes, and a rather rusty coat. In place of this typical student stood a young woman, of about middle height, well-formed, but not slender; her eyes were, as he saw in one moment's bewildered glance, neither dark nor hollow, but grey, with delicate brows almost square in outline. Hair of golden brown replaced the sickly black locks of the artist's mental picture, and the rusty black coat was a robe of soft dark blue, draping in elegant folds.

All this he saw in that one bewildered second. Then as a slight flush began to rise on the lady's cheek, he said confusedly:

"I beg your pardon most sincerely. I believe I have made some dreadful mistake."

So saying he retreated clumsily, he felt: and the lady bowed gravely without a word.

"I'd swear Mrs. Peters said a man," growled the artist, as he strode homeward at a furious pace. "But what *must* she think of me?" and the cloud of vexation which darkened his soul was becoming very dense when, suddenly, the comical aspect of the affair struck him, and he laughed long and heartily at the absurd mistake.

On returning from Chagleigh he found a note awaiting him It was from the rector's wife, inviting him to dine and play tennis at the Parsonage on the following Monday. Mrs. Bayle was a very friendly old lady, and she had adopted Harry as one of her prime favourites on his first visit to the moor. He was usually glad to be invited to her house, but this evening he could not think of anything but the vision of the student as she had appeared in that one short pregnant moment. His fine taste lingered in admiration on the graceful form and the soft dark drapery; and his fancy was much excited by the fair face, as he had seen it, just beginning to colour into fuller life.

"It was like the quickening of the statue!" he said enthusiastically. "I wonder if I could get the pose? But the expression was everything." Late as it was he seized a pencil and tried to sketch an outline. But both face and form eluded his skill, and he threw up the attempt in disgust, longing for another sight of the beautiful image.

Sunday came, and the artist found himself weighing the probabilities of Miss Evelyn's attendance at Chagleigh church. Finally, he decided to go there as usual, and to sit, as he had always done, in Mrs Bayle's great pew.

"If she's there I can't fail to see her," was his comforting reflection. With this pious motive he went to church and took his seat in the chancel pew. Mrs. Bayle was comfortably ensconced in one corner and her three grandchildren occupied three little stools at her feet; but these were the only persons he knew in the church. However, as they stood up to begin the service, he caught sight of a figure half hidden by the form of a burly farmer. His heart gave a glad bound, and he was everlastingly grateful to Farmer Roden as that worthy moved his position on the reading of the lessons, and permitted him to steal many furtive glances at the face that interested him so deeply.

"Who is the stranger lady?" he enquired of Mrs. Bayle as he was conducting her to her little pony-carriage after service.

"Miss Evelyn, you mean? She is a cousin of your friend the botanist, and you are going to meet her to-morrow afternoon. We dine at five, so that you may enjoy yourselves when it is cooler."

The little old lady was not aware what gratitude filled the heart of her favourite, but she was pleased with his bright smile and filial attentions, as he established her in the carriage and said good-bye.

IV.

THE drawing-room at Chagleigh Parsonage had never before seemed a very imposing room, in Harry Anson's eyes: but now, on entering, it seemed to him invested with the dignity of a presence chamber. For in the furthest window stood the woman who had interested him so much. He found that the grace of form, which was her greatest charm was natural, and not the accidental posture of a moment. Beauty of feature she could hardly be said to possess, but the wonderfully intelligent eyes, and broad, white forehead showed that her intellectual nature was of no mean order. Yet—and perhaps this was the secret of her grace—there was a certain individual modesty in her air and carriage.

Anson did not formulate these impressions, as they came to him in the first few moments of their intercourse. But he noticed, almost without intending to do so, every movement which might be characteristic. Dinner was soon announced, and, though he did not sit near her, the party was so small that he could still observe. The younger gentlemen left the table with the ladies, leaving the Rector over his glass of claret. Four of the party began to play almost immediately, and the rest—Anson, Miss Evelyn and Mrs Bayle—sat down to watch.

"I have been wishing for an opportunity to ask your forgiveness for my intrusion the other evening, Miss Evelyn," said the artist.

"And I have been wishing to thank you for your delicious trout," she answered, with a gleam of fun in her eyes. "I am afraid, though,

that I had no right to them. Mrs. Peters told me they were not intended for me."

"Ah, I see she has explained it all. I don't know how she came to make such a mistake. I suppose Mr. Evelyn simply said 'a student,' and left it to her ingenuity to guess that you were a lady."

"Yes, I think that must have been the cause. But I owe a great debt of gratitude to my cousin for finding out this lovely place."

"I was sorry not to see Mr. Evelyn when he was here," said Mr. Anson. "He used to try to infect me with a taste for botany when we rambled over the moor together."

So they talked on till the set was played through, and Miss Evelyn was compelled to join. Anson excused himself, more because he wished to watch her than because he was anxious to hear the result of Mrs. Bayle's last attempt at a Servants' Friendly Society. However, he listened to the good old lady with all due attention. He was much more sincere in his interest when she began to talk of her fair guest.

"She is a very talented girl, and a very good girl too," said Mrs. Bayle, warmly. "I don't know a more modest or a more unselfish creature."

"Is she studying for a profession?" asked Anson, curiously.

"Oh no, I think not—I hope not—I don't like the idea of women becoming doctors and lawyers, Mr. Anson. They will want to be clergymen next—and what a pretty state of things that would be!"

"Then I suppose Miss Evelyn studies for her own amusement?"

"Well, if you can call it so. But I believe she works very hard. I hope she takes plenty of exercise. I remember when I was a girl at school we walked three hours a day; morning and evening we went out, wet or dry."

"Miss Evelyn is an orphan, I believe?"

Seeing at last that her young friend was much interested in Miss Evelyn, Mrs. Bayle became exceedingly communicative, and everything that she told him interested him more and more deeply in the girl. She had been her father's constant companion since her mother died, leaving Florence only twelve years old. From that time she had kept house for him, nursed him when ill, written his letters and read to him in her so-called leisure moments. For five years she had given up all her time and thoughts to him, and though she was passionately fond of reading she had denied herself rigorously all relaxation of this kind, except, indeed, her reading to her father. Her father's death, three years before, had left her alone, and she had employed her time ever since in close and persevering study. Her only home was the house of an uncle who let her do just as she liked; "and she always likes to be alone," said Mrs. Bayle, thoughtfully. "It is strange and sad in so young a girl."

Miss Evelyn did not now look sad. At the moment she was standing at the edge of the court, and with a magnificent backhander

she had just won the last game for her side. The players sat down to rest, and Harry Anson brought Miss Evelyn a chair, saying:

"I hope you are not too tired to play again. I am going to ask you to play with me, if you will be so very kind."

"I shall be very glad," she answered brightly. "I am not at all tired."

"Do you mean *mid* or *with*, Mr. Anson?" queried Miss Annie Bayle, a schoolgirl. "For," she added wisely, "if you and Miss Evelyn are partners it is sure to be a love game—none of us can play against you two."

"That must be as Miss Evelyn wishes," returned Anson.

For several days Miss Evelyn went out regularly every morning. And no matter what direction she took she was sure to meet the artist either going or returning. Treating this at first as accidental, she exchanged a few pleasant words with him each time, but gradually her manner grew colder, and at length she passed him with a distant bow, and next day was not visible at all.

"Evidently I have been worrying her," said Anson to himself one evening, tired after three long, dull days by the trout-stream. "I can't stay here and not want to see her. But I can go away and leave her in peace."

With a very desolate feeling he made this characteristic resolve, but he meant to put it into practise, not knowing that fate had decreed otherwise.

V.

THE evening settled down early in a thick mist. Anson watched the dark masses of cloud rolling up and driving against the windows, wrapping the little farm-house in a dense covering. He was in a very restless mood, and the time hung heavily. He had some letters to write, but could not write them; his rod had got out of order, but he did not care to mend it. He was leaving Miss Evelyn, and it was leaving the best part of his life behind.

"Of course she can't bear the sight of me," he reflected. "And I can never explain why I haunted her, for now she won't give me a chance. I can't make her love me by keeping about; but I can't by keeping away, either. Anyhow, she shall enjoy the moors unmolested."

Mrs. Blake heard the news of her lodger's sudden departure with unfeigned dismay, notwithstanding his just settlement with her.

"But I might have known what to expect of a hartis'," she told her good man in the kitchen. "There was Master Toller, from Exeter, couldn't abear the sight o' crame. An' the young man over to Mrs. Ladd's, in Teighmoor, never gets up out o' bed till two o'clock in the day. Hartists is never rightly of it, my dear."

The member of the eccentric profession who had given rise to

these remarks was, meanwhile, engaged in putting together his possessions. He had packed his colours and easels, when a loud knock was heard at the door, and Mrs. Peters was admitted.

"Where's Mr. Anson?" demanded the good woman, quite breathless.

"Gone to bed, a' rackon," answered Blake "It's past ten o'clock. My dear, whatever be the matter?"

Anson had heard his name, and opened his door, saying: "Here I am, Mrs. Peters. What do you want with me?"

"Oh, Mr. Anson, where's Miss Evelyn? There's a mist out as black as night, and ——"

Before she could finish, Anson had seized his hat and was downstairs. "Miss Evelyn out in this mist!" he said. "Then not a moment must be lost. Mrs. Blake, give me a lantern. Which way did she go? Why didn't you come before? No one knows where she may be by this time."

Mrs. Peters began to weep. Mrs. Blake got a lantern and promised to wake her two sons and send them out to join in the quest, and Anson went out into the mist with Mrs. Peters, who was sobbing with fright and shaking with cold.

"Thomas was so bad, I didn't notice what a mist it was," she said piteously. "Miss Evelyn went out at four and said she would be back in a couple of hours. Maybe she's gone to the Rectory, but I never knew her to stay out a night yet."

Mrs. Peters' experienced eyes easily discerned the road to the Rectory, and she then left the young man to go on by himself. Her husband was really ill, and she dared not leave him.

The household had retired when Anson reached the Rectory, and he roused the old gardener with some difficulty. While he was trying to make old Trewin understand his errand, Mrs. Bayle appeared in dressing-gown and nightcap. She was much alarmed on hearing of the mist: Miss Evelyn had not been at the Rectory, and the old lady fully understood the danger to which her young friend was exposed. The Rector was away, and the only man on the place was Trewin, who, however, at once volunteered his aid in the search.

Anson was now growing desperate. He only waited to arrange that he should return to Mrs. Bayle before dawn, however the search might turn out, and he told the men who had followed him from his lodgings that they were to do likewise. He then plunged again into the gloom. He went, as he thought, in the Teighmoor direction, thinking this the most likely. He called Miss Evelyn's name now and then, and threw the rays of his lantern on every object he could discern along the road. At length he came to a place where the road dipped down and turned—he kept straight on and soon found that he was walking through the heather. He was as surely lost in the mist as if he had never trodden a moor in his life before, and his only chance lay in the hope of meeting one of the other seekers.

Hour after hour thus passed. When dawn came, struggling with

the mist that was now slowly rising, Anson found that he was many miles from the Rectory, the other side of Teighmoor, having skirted the town in some unaccountable way. Now for the first time he perceived that he was exhausted. He shivered as he dragged himself slowly along, and the great fear that had been with him through the night now seemed to have settled in the chill that wrapped him round. He went to the inn at Teighmoor and ordered a pony trap. The ostler knew him well and handed him the reins. But he could not hold them, and changed seats with the boy who was to bring back the chaise.

The road to Chagleigh Rectory had never seemed so long. At last they reached the gate, and Anson was descending, with difficulty, for his limbs were now stiff, when Mrs. Bayle rushed out, crying :

" Have you heard ? She is found ! She is quite safe ! "

Anson could only gasp out : " Where was she ? Is she hurt ? "

" She is as well as ever," said Mrs Bayle, in her motherly way. " But you are tired out—and how you shiver. You must go to bed directly and have some hot breakfast. Go and lie down on the drawing-room sofa till your room is ready."

He was only too glad to obey. When she brought him some breakfast a few minutes afterwards he looked more exhausted than ever, and could not be got to do more than taste the food. " You have a thorough chill upon you," she said decidedly. " Go to bed now and get warm if you can."

A thorough chill he had got. The long night spent in the cold mist provided him with a feverish cold which lasted for a fortnight. Mrs. Bayle watched him with motherly care, and as soon as he was able she moved him down to the drawing-room. By this time she had learned his feeling for Miss Evelyn, and the kind old lady determined to assist her favourite all that in her lay.

The explanation of the young lady's disappearance was simply this. She had walked out, not intending to go to Teighmoor, but meeting a small pony-chaise which belonged to a farmer near Chagleigh, she thought of driving to the town and back again, to see if some friends who were coming down to stay there had arrived. Jim Chubb, who was in charge of the pony-chaise, was glad enough to drive her for a small fee, and so she went to Teighmoor. But as the evening looked threatening her friends persuaded her to stay all night with them, and the boy was sent back to Chagleigh with a message for Mrs. Peters. But the boy had gone calmly to sleep, and the pony had made its way home in the mist, the boy not recollecting his message till next morning, when he went to Mrs. Peters with the news.

Mrs. Bayle often told Harry Anson of Miss Evelyn's kind enquiries. " She is very much distressed about you," said the good lady, noticing with a smile the good effect her words had upon her patient.

When the day came for his release from the sick-room, Mrs. Bayle said with some slyness :

"I have invited Miss Evelyn to come this afternoon, Harry. Do you think you are well enough to see her?"

It was like a dream, Harry thought. But she actually came and put out her hand with such a kindly look that his heart leaped up and his whole face was illumined. He had never looked so handsome.

"I can hardly say how much grieved I am to be the cause of your illness," she said, sitting down near him and regarding him with grave compassion.

What could he say? What did he say? I do not know. Something very foolish, doubtless. But Miss Evelyn did not think it foolish, for she talked on in her quiet tones, making the interesting invalid almost wild with contained happiness.

There were many more such afternoons in store for them. Harry did not get well quite so fast as might have been expected from a fine young fellow of twenty-three. But Miss Evelyn was always ready to read for him or sing to him or talk—anything to show how sorry she was that he had to suffer so much on her account. Her studies were rather interfered with, but it was wonderful how little she minded. And before the summer was over she had learned that there was a new and delightful world she had only dreamed of before—the Eden of perfect love.

LOVE'S LOYALTY.

From the French of VICTOR HUGO.

WHY pause I in woodlands
Where song-birds rejoice,
When sweetest of song-birds
I hear in thy voice?

The stars may be flashing,
Or cloudy the skies,
I care not, my star-light
I find in thy eyes.

'Neath the kisses of April
Our gardens they shine,
But bloom fairer flowers in
That warm heart of thine.

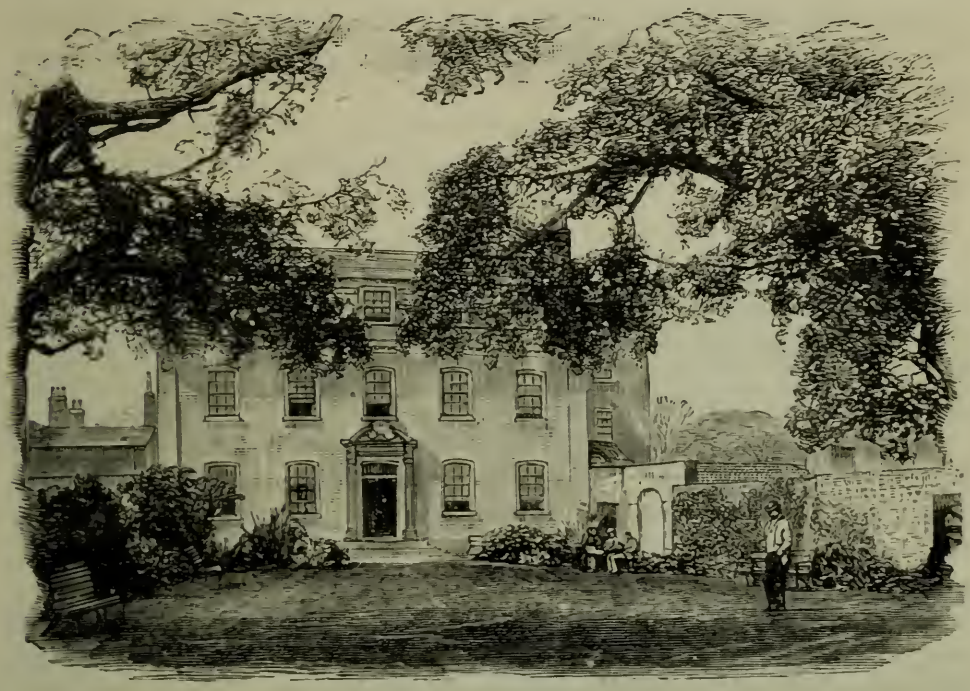
All sunshine, all moonlight,
Where'er I may rove,
All spring-time, all music,
Are mine in thy love.

ALICE KING.

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S.
Author of "Through Holland," "The Cruise of the Reserve Squadron," &c.

WITHOUT wishing to be alliterative, it is certain that we left Sark in silence and sorrow. And as a small vessel on a heavy sea is not conducive to a flow of spirits or conversation, the silence continued at least until we had reached the safe shelter of Guernsey harbour. For this we did reach in time and in a sense of rejoicing.



Old Government House.

The passage, short though it be, is undoubtedly unpleasant in anything but calm weather; and the smooth waters of Guernsey harbour after the outside storm and tempest and beating about, are infinitely acceptable.

As for Guernsey itself—after the quiet of Sark, its desolation and isolation, its singular and indescribable charm, Guernsey was quite a large, thickly populated and mildly dissipated town. The houses seemed interminable as those of a metropolis; the streets felt, and looked, close and crowded; the quiet and repose of Sark made it appear a thousand miles distant when compared with this scene of bustle and small excitements. No wonder, then, that we went back in imagination to the little islands of Herm and Jethou, and felt that

we still had a day before us which should be marked with a white stone, provided only a propitious day should dawn.

And a day did dawn. One certain morning announced itself so bright and resplendent, that we felt our opportunity had come. About ten o'clock we found ourselves once more on the pier, a boat awaiting us at the foot of the steps. Away we went, scudding out of the harbour with a fair breeze and a dancing, glancing sea. The stormy skies of Sark had disappeared, for the moment at any rate; it was the perfection of invigorating weather. The boatmen were a couple of young fishermen, glad of a day's employment out of the season; a chance, as it were, of killing two birds with one stone; for, after a few hours' rest on their return, they would put out again for a night's fishing. The Guernsey fishermen are said to be a good specimen of their class, thrifty and well-conducted. They observe the Sunday also very strictly, and we were told that it would be difficult to persuade any one of them to take out his boat between Saturday night and Monday morning.

We first made for Jethou, the smaller of the two islands, the nearer, and the most quickly seen. They are separated only by a narrow strip of water, but it is sufficient to make them very distinct from each other. The boat flew through the sparkling sea, and before very long we found ourselves under the shadow of Jethou, which rose out of the water like a solitary green hill. But there is at least one house upon it, and in our ramble we came across a woman and a dog, who, for this morning, had the island in possession. Her "good man," the woman informed us, was away.

We mounted the rugged steps and a little way up the hill came upon the lonely house. The dog barked and out came the female custodian. The house was only a cottage, small and humble, but without rival to suggest invidious comparisons. The châtelaine of this feeble fortress informed us very civilly that we were free to roam the island, but she hoped we would respect her cabbages and spare her cow. We promised to observe both restrictions and began to wonder whether we had got back to the days of Rob Roy.

But the scenery had nothing of the wildness of Scotland, nor its romance; nor had the woman, though apparently Lady of the Isle, any of the picturesque appearance of a highland chieftainness. Free-spoken she was, with the straightforward simplicity of one unused to the world; but she was modest at the same time, and the commanding voice and terrible frown of Helen McGregor would have sat ill upon her. She indicated the path we were to follow, which indeed needed no indication, and retired within her clean and comfortable homestead. Her faithful prime minister at once held out a flag of truce by ceasing his noisy bark and following his liege, his tail comfortably between his legs. He trotted up to the fire that was burning in the hearth, though the day was warm, and threw himself before it with a dignified expression of countenance and a fine sense of having

done his duty. It was not often, now-a-days, that he was called upon to announce the arrival of strangers.

We went upwards. We too felt, somehow, in comfortable possession of the island. Woman and dog out of sight and hearing, we had it utterly to ourselves. The sense of freedom and retirement from the world was very delicious, perhaps because we knew it would be very fleeting. I do not believe that even stolen pleasures would be sweet if they were not of necessity shortlived. Before the conscience has had time to burden itself with remorse, the stolen pleasure has passed out of existence.

The pathway indicated by the guardian of Jethou wound round the island, and we ascended by degrees. There was something bright and singularly pleasant about Jethou. It was so small—about a mile in circumference—that standing at the summit you could take it all in at a glance. It might be likened to a lovely green emerald, and the silver setting was the sea that plashed and sparkled around. So near to you on all sides was this sea, that you were enclosed in a belt of sound; the sound, so pleasant and so soothing, of water breaking upon the shore, swishing over pebbles, rising and falling with a rhythm that enchants the ear like the measured cadence of a poem, or the dreamy extemporising of a master.

The island seemed to rest upon the sea. Almost, one wondered why it stood so firm and sure, and did not rock and sway in obedience to this great moving power that held it captive. A little way off was Herm, small enough also, yet large in comparison Between them flowed the narrow channel of water, though always deep and wide enough to float a man-of-war. Further away, yet tantalisingly near, was our lovely and late lamented Sark. Our affection for it—I can at least speak of personal sentiments—was as vivid and constant as ever; we mourned her as a lover his lost mistress.

We were on the very summit of the hill, and the winds of heaven played around us. So also did the rabbits, almost at our feet. At sight of us, the tame little creatures could scarcely be persuaded to turn their white tails and disappear into their holes. It was the only token of life within range; that, and a few cows, and the boat that rocked upon the water at the foot of the steps where the men waited our return in patience. That return we should have liked to delay, though there was absolutely nothing to explore. Here was grazing land for the two or three cows that kept company with the rabbits and were more sociably inclined. They gazed at us with great, intelligent eyes, recognised friends with the instinct of animals, permitted us to approach and talk to them, and no doubt would have talked in return if endowed with the gift of speech. Beyond this pasture-land were the cabbages we had been entreated to respect nor felt inclined to transgress. Cabbages had no attraction for us. They were too large for buttonholes, and being stalkless above ground, were not even tempting as curiosities. To our left was a small plantation of trees, utterly bare

of leaves. They looked old, decayed and dead, and stretched forth towards each other the most weird, naked and ghostly arms that ever were seen. Had we come upon them by moonlight we should certainly have taken them for an army of resuscitated spirits. Clothed in winding sheets, they would have terrified the stoutest heart and routed the bravest regiment.

I say that we could have lingered long here, and we did linger longer than was necessary. There are places that charm you from the first moment you set foot upon them, you hardly know why or wherefore. Faces and voices that take you captive at first sight and sound may be reduced to a definition: magnetic attraction; the inner

GUERNSEY HARBOUR FROM THE HEIGHTS.

consciousness or spirit inhabiting the same sphere; something outside and beyond ourselves: we are drawn or repelled whether we will or no. But it is less easy to account sometimes for the home feeling that creeps over one at the first moment of seeing certain places. It is as if we had been there in our dreams or in a previous state of existence. "Here I could live and die," are the words that rise unconsciously to the mind, and time and familiarity have no power to lessen that first impression.

It was thus with that small, insignificant little Jethou. There was nothing about it romantic or sublime, or in any way to raise enthusiasm. No grand rocks, no mediæval ruins, no luxuriant vegetation. Scarcely an inch of level ground. A few fields, a plantation of cabbages, many rabbits and a few cows. And yet something about it strangely attracted us. Here for a time we might pitch our

tent and be perfectly happy. A green hill rising out of the sea, which surrounded us in all its beauty. We seemed to have entered into intimate communion with it, with the winds of heaven, and all the bright blue canopy above.

But the boat was tossing upon the water, calm though it was, and the patience of our trusty men must not be overtaxed. So we went round by another way and thus completed the circuit of the island, and felt it might be said that we knew every inch of the ground. The feminine guardian of the cottage came out, saw us safely off her territory, testified to our honesty in the matter of cows and cabbages, and we set sail for Herm.

OUTWARD BOUND FROM GUERNSEY.

It was a very short sail indeed, and landing was an easier matter than it had been at Jethou. The invasion was more quickly accomplished. But from the first moment Herm did not attract us as Jethou had done; we had never seen it in our dreams. It seemed more commonplace, and from no other cause, I believe, than that our landing was greeted by a half dozen very ordinary urchins, who in looks, dress and manners might have been freshly imported from the East of London. Furthermore we saw, ahead of us, a short row of commonplace cottages, which looked neither lively, interesting, nor in the slightest degree romantic. And yet one of them at least was inhabited by a woman, who, to doubtless many other virtues, added that of kindliness. For H. was thirsty and had nothing wherewith to quench his desire; and this good woman set him her

best glass and went down and drew water from a deep, deep well, and staggered up the path with a baby in one hand and a full bucket in the other. H. drank of the sparkling liquid, was refreshed, and went on his way rejoicing.

It seemed a difficult thing, however, to make way in Herm. On nearly all the gates and at almost every turning was the announcement: "Private Road: No Admittance;" until we felt that here, at least, hospitality had ceased to reign. Cold, barren, comfortless, unkindly, such we felt Herm. After the few cottages alluded to, we walked and walked, and saw no habitation, and met no one. Utterly deserted and abandoned seemed the place. We boldly set aside the warnings and no one stayed us.

The island was very much larger than Jethou, but not pleasanter in proportion. It is private property. Some time ago, when the monasteries were abolished in France, and the monks, like Lord Bateman, had to sail east and west into foreign countries, the monks of the Grande Chartreuse thought they too would be put to flight. Amongst other places they bought the little island of Herm, intending to make there their famous liqueur in peace and profit. But, for the sake of the revenue their distillery brings to the French Government, who are wise in their generation, the Carthusians were allowed to remain in their retreat and have not up to the present time settled in Herm. Such is the story as 'twas told to us.

It was the only thing that by the power of association tinged the island with a slight atmosphere of romance. There rose up before us a vision of a splendid pass in Alpine mountains. The recollection of a day when this pass was white and cold and snow-laden. When the fir trees were covered with crystals that hid all the green and sparkled like jewels under the influence of a straw-coloured wintry sun in a pale-blue sky. We saw the horses struggling upward, slipping, and recovering themselves like the sure-footed beasts they were. The mountain stream had ceased to flow, for it was nothing but ice. Higher and higher, away from the world, out of humanity's reach, into the very heart of the mountains. Great snow piles, gigantic, endless, stretching heavenwards. The silence of death on all hands: appalling solitude that seemed to lock one's senses and chill one's life-blood. Inconceivable beauty and grandeur, yet awful by reason of its size, this endless expanse of white, this eternity of unbroken silence. And then, after a long, long struggle upwards, on the right, the low pile of the monastery, with its huge distillery, its countless cells, its little army of monks, who think themselves happy, we may well hope for them, and never cease, we may well pray for them, to count the world well lost.

It was a Good Friday Eve and we were going up to hear the midnight mass After a light and by no means appetising supper, we were conducted to our cells. They were bare and comfortless, and freezingly cold. All night long the snow fell from the slanting roof

to the ground at regular intervals, with a mournful, monotonous thud—for the skies had overcast at sundown, and snow was coming thickly from the clouds. Then, a few moments before midnight, I was awakened by a cadaverous face in a cowl, who opened the door just wide enough to admit his deathlike head, and a ghostly whisper announced that mass was about to commence. Next he left me in utter darkness and glided away like a phantom through the interminable corridors of this living tomb.

It was the monks of this order who had bought Herm, and the fact cast some slight atmosphere of romance upon the little island. It was well named, too, for Herm is said to be a corruption of the word Hermit. The island was severe enough, even for a strict order of monks; but what a change for them from the bosom of those far-off impenetrable mountains; those miles and miles of fir forests; trees so sad and sombre, with their vast solitudes never broken by any sound but the melancholy sighing of the wind amongst the branches. Yet a somewhat similar sound they would have had here to recall their lost scenes, in the surging of the sea upon the shore. And the ever-restless sea, too, is just as suggestive of might and grandeur and eternity as those great unchangeable mountains, and is, after all, less cold and unfriendly.

We threw ourselves on the warm white sand and despatched the midday meal we had taken care to bring with us, for the island has neither inn nor any other house of entertainment. It gives you no welcome of any kind. Next we noticed the only civil announcement as yet seen, in the words: "This way to the shell-beach." Taking the hint, and passing over a stretch of desolate heather-land, we soon found ourselves on the opposite side of the island.

This shell-beach is the attraction of Herm. It seems to be the only one in all the islands, and people flock over to Herm during the season for the purpose of making a collection. This is easily done. A long stretch of beach was white with shells. There were long lines of shells, and piles and piles of shells, and little mountains of shells. We could not walk without treading upon shells, and we could not dig but we came to shells One knew not where to begin. Thousands of them were very pretty, very few of them were rare. Perhaps the prizes had been secured by the multitudes during all the past summer months. The shore was flat, and the tide was flowing gently and calmly, possibly bringing up fresh treasures for others to gather. We certainly should not. Nevertheless we made a considerable selection by dint of wandering up and down in that searching, expectant manner that is more tiring than the treadmill (not that I can speak of the latter from experience); and a couple of hours passed as a moment.

Then we left the shell-beach and the inflowing tide, and, regardless of warnings, plunged across the island. On the higher part was a curious building that certainly must be explored. It proved as desolate and deserted as any other portion of Herm. A large, straggling

pile, with quadrangles and detached rows, and a huge boiler in one corner, and no sign of life anywhere. Yet people evidently lived there, for a few pigs of enormous size came up on a visit of inspection; but we, having an antipathy to pigs, drove them back, and they decamped with the graceful gallop of their kind, grunting and squealing, to report an invasion and save the island. The building seemed the very place for a distillery, and the little houses might easily have been turned into cells for the monks. It is quite possible that they may yet come and take possession, and people the island, and make it less dreary and desolate than it seemed to-day. The Jesuits have settled in Jersey, why not the Carthusians in Herm?

The afternoon was waning when we felt it necessary to bid it farewell. We had seen all there was to be seen. It was not very much. A portion of the island is farmed; there were ploughed fields and potato fields, and we actually came upon the startling apparition of a man at work in one of them, who stopped in his labour, and stared at us as if we had been aborigines, or a first instalment of the monks come to take possession of their own. This was almost at the end of the tour of inspection. In a few minutes we had rounded a corner, and there, far down, beyond the steps, was the boat, whilst the men, all safe and sound, might have sat for models of Resignation. Down we went, and at the steps found a couple of women and a dozen children. One of them was the ministering spirit who at midday had supplied H. with fresh water from the well.

"I am sorry, sirs," she said, as we approached, "that I did not think of offering to make you some tea before leaving the island. You would have been glad of a cup, it may be."

We should, undoubtedly. We had even thought of proposing to return for it at four o'clock. But the good woman's husband had come in to his dinner whilst H. was deep in his refreshing draught, and was so surly, and so evidently looked upon us as intruders, that we felt any further advances on our part would be received with a deeper draught of cold water than the above referred to. We thanked the woman for her friendly intentions; it was too late now to do anything else; and said we would remember them when we next visited the island.

Then we departed, and the women and children watched us away. There was a melancholy in their attitude which we felt had a corresponding note in their history. How could it be otherwise on this dreary, almost uninhabited island? Their lives could know no change from day to day; few events beyond the little fractious, worrying cares that always follow in the wake of a troupe of worrying children. They were evidently poor, too. Less than a year ago they were inhabiting one of the largest towns in England; and here, if they felt at all about it, they must have seemed as cut off from the world as the monks in their monastery, in the far-off mountains of France. Seated on the top of that long flight of grey, rugged steps,

in the shine and shadow of the declining sun, they looked companions in sorrow, and were to us a last melancholy impression of Herm.

The day had not disappointed our hopes. There is something infinitely pleasant about these deserted islands, where you find so little record of mankind. Even Herm became a recollection one liked to dwell upon. We got back to Guernsey in the glory of an autumn evening. The declining sun cast a flush upon town and sea. The sky was resplendent with fleecy, gold-tipped clouds. Guernsey harbour looked quite picturesque and romantic. Guernsey, too, had had an exciting day. Whilst we, pursuing the even tenour of our way, had trod the quiet paths and shores of Herm and Jethou, the Governor had held a reception at Old Government House Hotel, to which all the town had been bidden, and we returned to find our comfortable quarters very much like the banquet-room in Moore's exquisite melody and most pathetic poem—its lights all fled, its garlands dead. But, ere long, order was reduced out of chaos, and nothing remained to testify of what had been but a sweet perfume of flowers, which hung about the rooms and corridors as the scent of distilled roses will hang round its shattered vase.

A BIRTHDAY.

1884.

Your birthday, dear—a year ago
  The world with Maytide joy was glad ;
I heard you whisper, as you stood
In the green shadow of the wood,
  "Can any heart to-day be sad?"

A year ago I brought you flowers,
  Long sprays of hawthorn, pink and white ;
But now those flowers are dry and dead,
And you may pass with noiseless tread
  O'er fields with fairer blossoms bright.

A year ago I wished you joy,
  That all things good the year might bring ;
But, ere the time rolled round again,
Came first the Angel Herald Pain,
  And then, a summons from the King.

A year ago ! A year ago
  I clasped your hands and kissed your brow ;
Now you have journeyed far away ;
Beyond our earthly night and day—
  The angels keep your birthday now.

FLORENCE TYLEE.

A FOG ROMANCE.

IT was mid-morning in fair London town. It might have been night-fall in the City of the Clouds for all outward evidence to the contrary. Masses of dingy vapour rolled up against the window-panes, stirred now and then by a sooty little breeze, from nowhere in particular, that dispersed them not, only made a little black eddy and departed.

Indoors it felt at once hot, clammy, choking and smutty. The room was airy and spacious; one of the best private sitting-rooms Langham had to offer; yet Imogen Ray had just declared, "It felt like a chimney on fire being put out with wet blankets." She was leaning against the window-frame as she spoke, gazing into the grimy sea of vapour, half-interestedly, half-abstractedly.

She was very beautiful, even by that hideous light; with the singular beauty only found on the farther shores of the Atlantic; delicate, fragile and marvellously brilliant. ("The beauty of snowpeaks at sunrise; of an opal, with its heart of fire under its veil of snow," to quote the unsuccessful beginning of a poetical adorer, who gave up after a few more attempts to reduce the Ineffable to a pen and ink summary.) She looked like a poem, a melody, an artist's dream; and was a matter-of-fact, alert, business-like young damsel, practical and self reliant as became a citizen of "Airth's greatest nation."

Her companion was leisurely finishing his breakfast. He might have been a dignitary of the Church by his dress. His stalwart build, and a general suggestion of open air life that pervaded him, seemed to indicate a sailor or a colonist, but the noble, intellectual head, with its silken mane of snowy hair, the massive features with their curious expression of indolent shrewdness could belong to none but the original of the face that smirked in the *Graphic* and scowled in the *Illustrated* on the side-table, and had been for the past week decorating the photographers' windows in very mixed company; the face of the temporary lion of London literary society, the great Trans-Atlantic poet, philosopher and critic, Everard Holt, whom the literary world aforesaid had for the past week been delighting to honour.

"You have your wish at last, Imogen," he said; "this is 'quite a London particular,' according to Guppy."

"Yes. I felt we should lose something if we left without a fog—but I've got rather a thicker one than I expected here."

She didn't talk Yankee, only paid more respect to her vowel-sounds and enunciated more incisively than is the wont of us indolent Britishers and her voice had the music of silver on silver. Speaking,

she glanced out into the dinginess and in at a square envelope which she held daintily and respectfully. It was fastened by a big red seal bearing a coat of arms and a coronet, at which she glanced with admiration unworthy her race.

"This is a gloomy ending to our holiday, dear," and Everard looked towards her anxiously. *Towards* her, not *at* her, thereby betraying what many of his casual acquaintances never perceived, that he was blind—totally, hopelessly blind—from some accident late in his life at the very zenith of his popularity and usefulness.

He had accepted the calamity characteristically, tried patiently and fairly every possible means of recovery; then, these failing, with the same zest with which he had been wont to turn to some fresh branch of study, he had applied himself to the mastery of every art and device by which the lost sense might be supplied. He had a marvellous memory and a curiously sensitive nervous organisation—and he had Imogen, his loving, devoted adopted child.

"Nothing can spoil our holiday, or our home-coming," she added quickly. "From first to last all has been pleasantness."

"And you don't regret the old country in your heart of hearts?"

"I am very, very glad to have been here and seen England and English people for myself; but my heart of hearts is and always will be American. Oh, it's good to think that in a fortnight more we shall be under the Chislehurst elms again!"

Everard and Imogen had spent a year wandering happily about Europe together, sight-seeing, making friends, collecting materials for a new work and a course of lectures, and finding themselves welcome and honoured everywhere by Everard's brethren of the great craft of book-making. The morning paper that lay collapsed on the floor contained a long account of a grand banquet in his honour given by a distinguished circle of his admirers the night before, and also a paragraph announcing his departure next day from Liverpool for New York.

"What time do we leave this?" Everard asked presently.

"Not till five," Imogen replied rather dismally, "and I've packed my last scrap and read you every line worth reading in all the papers, and there's nothing left to do but sit and long for some fresh air after all last night's gas and eloquence till the fog rises. Ugh! how it seems to close one in and strangle one."

"Fogs after all have their limits," said Everard. "It *is* possible, I believe, to go right through and find light and free air beyond. Should you like to try? *I'm* ready."

"So am I, but stop—let me put up your things first and start with a clear conscience."

"You are too late for once, oh most scrupulous of guardian angels. I have packed. Did it myself in a fit of independence and consulted the chambermaid on the result. She says I have left nothing out and made a beautiful job of it."

"Uncle, are you tired of me?" with a pained ring of reproach in her voice.

"Imogen, are you jealous of your authority over me, and afraid of my ascertaining the limits of my powers? There is better work in the world for you, my dear, than playing dog-in-a-string to a blind old man; and when it comes, I want you to feel that though I prize your love and service beyond all else on earth, I can live without you, my darling." He spoke slowly, as if watching to detect some sign of her mood. "Now get ready, in ten minutes, if you can," he ended briskly, starting up and making for the door.

The waiter had drawn forward a side-table to hold some breakfast accessories, and Everard, ignorant of the change, came heavily against it. He laughed, ascertained with rapid touch that nothing was overset or injured, and left the room lightly. Imogen, knowing his ways, did not attempt to interfere or assist, but stood aside watching him with a loving, wistful look in her shining eyes.

"Do without me one of these days! He *can't*, with all his pretence, and he shall never be asked; never, never! My darling uncle, the best, noblest, wisest of men. It is only too much honour for a stupid little thing like me to be permitted to give him my life's best love—and he has it."

She winked away a bright little tear from her long lashes—laughed a little, and drew out of the big envelope a decidedly masculine-looking epistle, in bold black characters, with a big scrawly signature on the last page, "Gerald Adare."

"It looks plain enough and easy enough to answer," mused she, "and it's neither one nor the other. He says"—running hastily over the contents—"he relies on me to tell him whether he may really avail himself of my uncle's invitation to Chislehurst. If so, he thinks of starting at once for the States, by the same steamer as ourselves, if possible. He is at Liverpool awaiting my reply, &c., &c. Now what *does* it mean, or what will he understand by my answer. He used to talk of wishing to see America, and perhaps of settling down there, though uncle only laughed at the notion; and now it seems as if he were in earnest.

"If I write him a cool little note telling him—what is strictly true—that the doctors recommend perfect rest and quiet to uncle for some time to come; if I gently put him off for the present, why, it will be for good and all. I feel it. Some other fancy will come between us and there will be the end of our friendship. I *hate* to think it! I don't mind saying so—when nobody can hear me."

"Shall I say 'Come'? He'll come fast enough. He'll see our beautiful home and what Americans are at their best; not the rubbish that disgraces our nation all over Europe. He'll understand then what my dear uncle is—a prophet that *has* honour in his own country; and—if he comes, he'll never go away again. Why should he? He says he is a cosmopolitan, with *no* local prejudices (unless he has

one in favour of the place where *we* happen to be found); he *hates* his Irish estates and his title, and would gladly hear the last of both one and the other. *Shall* I say 'Come'?—and yet ——"

Here Everard's footstep was audible, and hastily concealing the letter, Imogen hurried on her hat and Newmarket and went to meet him.

"Which way?" he asked, as they issued from the portico on to the greasy pavement.

"This way looks the clearest. If you keep straight on and then turn right round and come back we *can't* be lost," argued Imogen in her ignorance, and they started.

Unfortunately, they came to a street which did *not* go straight on. "Well, we can take this left turning and keep straight along here. It certainly grows lighter at the end." They groped on cautiously, guided by the area railings. Then came a noisy crossing of some main thoroughfare. Imogen looked at Everard doubtfully and turned to the left again rather than attempt to pilot him over.

It was growing brighter, fading from dim to pale copper colour; there *must* be sun somewhere, and in the distance was a glimpse of trees, that Imogen decided must be "one of the parks," but which turned out to be an unknown square. Then a policeman, against whom they ran blindly, helped Everard across a street and put them in the direct road home—which proved to be by such disreputable back-streets that Imogen got alarmed and made for the first open space.

Then the fog lifted, showing a large clear street with something like a cab-stand at the far end, and along it they sped merrily.

"Why we've got home without knowing it; there's Portland Place down that turning," cried Imogen, delighted.

"It doesn't *seem* like our part of the world," said Everard, who had the ears of a trapper; "but places sound different in this atmosphere."

"We shall come to a name presently." Down swooped the fog again before the words left Imogen's lips, and when they got to a name it was one they had never heard of. The situation was becoming monotonous. It had been amusing enough at first, when the brighter atmosphere seemed to lie at the end of every street they turned into, while Everard made guesses at places and people, like a schoolboy playing blind-man's-buff, and laughed at his guide's helplessness. Now he was silent and Imogen anxious. It was growing thicker and thicker, till even her way-mark, the area railings, failed her if she lost hold of them, and had to be recovered by groping. She felt Everard drag on her arm as she led him, and his face, as well as she could make it out, looked drawn and overspread with a hue she had learnt to mistrust.

"What are we to do?" she asked, trying to laugh. "I can't turn back in search of that cab-stand. I forgot how many turnings we have passed, and policemen seem to have vanished from the face of the earth."

One o'clock boomed from an invisible church steeple.

"It's quite a new part of the town," she went on; "large houses and no shops. We must have come far out west without knowing it, and I never thought of bringing the wraps."

She stood perplexed, leaning against the railings of a large house looming aloft through the murk.

"I'll tell you what I can do! I'll ring and ask our way. Why didn't I think of that sooner?" And up the steps she led him and gave a vigorous peel at the bell. A footman answered it promptly.

"We are lost in the fog," said Imogen; "can you direct us to the Langham Hotel?"

The man's face grew doubtful. "I don't know that I can, miss. It's a good way from here—but I'll enquire."

"No; if it's far off tell me where I can get a cab."

"Well, if you go straight on, turn to the right, and take the third street on your right again, you may find one on the stand—or there's Toke's livery stables close by."

"That's better." But a glance at Everard made her reflect. "Is there anyone in the house who can go for me and let us wait here?" Thomas stared at the audacious proposal. "Or can some one show me the way and let this gentleman rest here?"

Thomas had heard of umbrella snatchers and overcoat thieves, and looked as if it were more than his place was worth to fall into that arrangement either. However, Thomas was young and impressionable, and Imogen's face and voice worked on his tender heart. "I'll enquire, miss," he conceded, and, crafty in his way, went with his story, not to the respectable old butler just then crossing the hall, but sharp to the right, through morning-room and library, to his young mistress's own sitting-room.

He was back in two minutes with "Miss Langton's compliments, and will you and the gentleman please step in."

They gladly followed him as he retraced his way through the softly-carpeted, richly-furnished rooms to the very heart and centre of the house's comfort and luxury. A long, low room lighted by a silver lamp at the far end, near which on a couch lay a girlish figure.

"I cannot rise to receive you," she spoke in a sharp, though musical voice, "please excuse me and come and sit down."

Imogen felt as she approached the keen exhaustive gaze of a pair of the brightest, darkest eyes she had ever met; eyes disproportionately large for a tiny, eager white face. She found Everard a seat, and then said:

"We are in great difficulties, and all through my foolhardiness. Will you help us?"

"With pleasure. I hear you want a guide and a messenger, you shall have one directly. Was it not odd? I was just lying speculating on what *I* should do if I were out alone in the fog when your ring came."

The bright eyes had left Imogen and wandered off to Everard, who now moved within the circle of the lamplight. "I—excuse me," she faltered, suddenly excited, "but may I not know your name?"

"Everard Holt."

"I *knew* it," she said triumphantly, producing a large photograph from an envelope. "My uncle brought me home this last night. He was at Willis's Rooms."

"Was he Colonel Pyers-Lloyd, who returned thanks for the Army?"

"Now how *could* you possibly tell that? We are not at all alike."

"I cannot judge of your faces, but your voices are the same."

She clapped her hands in a gleeful, childish fashion. "Delightful! You recognised the Welsh accent. How pleased he will be! Don't you know he was there as representative of Cymric poetry, and has more titles than you would care to hear as a bard?"

"I know his translations well, and have read his monograph on Cymric versification."

"You *must* stay and see him. He will be home to luncheon and will never forgive me if I let you go. You *will* stay. I will order the carriage as soon after as you please."

Everard waited for Imogen to reply, which she did with quite unreasonable hesitation. Miss Langton was in hospitable earnest; her uncle acquiescent, it would be utterly and superfluously ungracious to decline; but she could not accept with her wonted graceful frankness, though she tried to be cordial. She was transferred to the charge of a sedate maid, who assisted her to remove her wraps and the traces of fog and soot through which she had been struggling, and freshly prinked and smiling she returned to her hostess.

"I wonder what ails me?" she asked herself, as from the room door she beheld her uncle and Miss Langton in full tide of talk. "Why does the air of this place thrill me into a fever of self-consciousness? I could fancy Miss Langton the dark lady that all fortune-tellers are agreed shall cross my path! Absurd."

The dark bright eyes, charged with their curious magnetic attraction, rested on her as she advanced, and she blushed like an embarrassed schoolgirl. The servants entered directly after, with preparations for luncheon, which was laid on a table within reach of Miss Langton's couch. Imogen sat silently observant. Her training in art had been thorough enough to teach her the value of her surroundings. Each detail of the room seemed to have been specially chosen by some one of peculiar taste with money to gratify it. The flickering fire of scented wood on the wide hearth glimmered over carved wood, wrought brass, rare china, curiously mingled tints of colour, a screen of exotics masking the street's ugliness, and the gilt and leather of sumptuous bindings. Books were everywhere, and piles of papers, stands of engravings and photographs, all clustered round the central

figure of the girlish mistress of the house, at whom Imogen had hardly ventured to glance at first. She was young; much younger at the second glance; at the third, handsome. The original type of the face, fine and noble, worn and shrunken by long continued pain or care that had drawn fretted lines between the eyebrows and curved the lips distressfully. A cloud of dusky hair was swept back and upwards and secured by two golden pins. Her dress was a loose gown of dark crimson velvet, edged with grey fur, from the sleeves of which her tiny waxen hands peeped out, weighted by one massive ring.

She presided gracefully at the table, on which the china and glass were art studies, and each piece of plate worthy a separate line in a collector's catalogue. Colonel Pyers-Lloyd did not appear, and nobody missed him. Everard, his momentary faintness passed away, was bright and interested He felt the influence of the surrounding atmosphere (not to speak of the luncheon being the perfection of good cheer), touched the beautiful things about him delicately and appreciatively, listening to Miss Langton's few words of clear description and—luncheon over—fell into one of his happiest moods of talk, that an admiring biographer would have given all his spare cash to overhear. Imogen was courteously included in the conversation, but soon sank into silent thought. She had never seen her uncle so completely at his best in strange company, frank and pleasant as he always was, Miss Langton though saying little, seemed to draw him on by some mysterious sympathy, from general topics to personal experiences, till Imogen listened wonderingly to his stories of long-past struggles, cherished aspirations, thoughts, fancies, successes, failures; sacred things, that she had not dared to touch, had only gazed on from afar with reverence, brought forth for the handling of this curious stranger.

"She is playing upon him—the witch! I hate her. How can she do it, though?" and she resumed her study, half in admiration, half in repugnance. "She could bewitch me too, if she thought it worth while," she admitted later on, reluctantly.

The afternoon slid on imperceptibly, and Everard, worn out by fatigue and unusual excitement, laid his head back in his large armchair, and slept. Miss Langton smiled—a pretty, kind smile it was—and gently lowered her lamp, then pointed to a low chair by her couch, invitingly. Imogen slipped into it, unwilling, but drawn by the spell of the dark, speaking eyes. She held hers averted in silence for a moment, and then—a soft little hand stole round her neck, and a kiss from two burning lips dropped on her forehead. "You are so beautiful, so loving and true; he has told me all about you, and now I am going to make you as wretched as I am myself." And Imogen felt the dash of hot tears on her cheek.

Imogen sat trembling, excited, waiting for the next words, and when they came not, timidly lifted her eyes. Miss Langton was

lying back on her couch, her hands clasped hard over her breast, her lips moving silently.

"Do you love him?" she asked sharply, with a glance at Everard's noble placid face.

"Dearly, dearly. He has been more than father to me all my life. I am not his niece. I am nothing to him but a friendless, nameless, little outcast waif, that he picked up from amongst the rest of the street rubbish; took me from a horror of blows and starvation, that is all my recollection of babyhood, took me up to a heaven of love and brightness.—God bless him!" cried Imogen, through her tears, dropping her head on her knees, and crying quietly from her full heart's thankfulness.

"And you are ready to leave him for so poor a thing as Gerald Adare?"

Imogen started at the sting of these words, looking proudly up, with eyes aflame under their wet lashes.

Miss Langton drew forward a small stand on which stood a miniature easel, veiled by a black drapery. Her hand trembled as she touched its folds, but she drew them aside hastily, as if fearing to trust herself. A large photograph had been concealed there, a portrait of a tall, handsome young man, leaning against a tree, holding a great Irish deerhound in a leash. It was a beautiful picture, as well as an excellent likeness, giving fairly well an impression of the languid grace of the original, with his low, wide forehead, sleepy, "faithless Irish eyes," and mouth almost too sweet for a man.

"Yes, he *is* a poor thing—but mine own—mine own," she murmured, and turned again to Imogen. "You know it?"

"That is Mr. Adare—Lord Adare, I mean. I forget how we made the mistake at first, but he would never let us correct it," she replied, hurriedly, with an attempt at indifference.

"Where did you meet him?"

"At a table d'hôte at Prague, where he helped us through some contretemps. I had left Everard for a short time, and he was in difficulties all round when I got back. Then we met at Vienna, and travelled together home. He was so good in helping my uncle to see everything, or rather me to see everything for uncle."

"I understand," very drily. "When did you see him last?"

"In Paris, last month." And Imogen felt the letter rustle guiltily in her pocket.

"And now he is going to the States?"

"I—don't know," faltered Imogen.

"He will go if you ask him, and then ——"

"I am not the ruler of his actions," cried the poor harassed beauty, fairly roused. "He may come if he likes, and I dare say he will. I hope so. *I* don't call him a poor thing, if *you* do."

Miss Langton lay silent, her eyes closed, her hands clasped nervously across her breast. When she spoke it was calmly and sadly.

"You must let me tell you all I can about my cousin Gerald. You ought to know it, in any case. He was my father's ward, but he lived with his mother, his other guardian, for six months out of every year. She was a fool—" Miss Langton spoke viciously—"a soft, sentimental creature, with no moral fibre, who kept her boy at her apron-string singing hymns and playing gentle games till he grew to look on our home, with my rough-and-ready brothers' society, as a species of annual purgatory. They couldn't make allowance for him. He shuddered at them. I lived in a state of combat with both parties, championing him against them, and quarrelling with him for his priggishness. He was a loveable, pretty little man, and we were faithful allies on the whole. I *drove* him to persist in going to Eton, when Lady Adare wished to complete his education under some pet curate of her own ; and he did fairly well, against all our expectations. Then came Oxford, with less credit. I fumed and raged at the reports that reached us, and at last worried my father into taking me to see him at college and speak my mind, as of yore. He listened to my exhortations—with a difference.

"'Maudie,' he said, when I had done, 'will you take me for good and all, and make something of me?'

"Such a happy time followed. Seven long years ago, my dear. Seven long years!"

She stopped and sighed. Imogen held a Japanese fan between her face and the light, and sat motionless and silent. Only Everard's quiet breathing and the light fall of the feathery wood ash broke the pause.

"I wonder what you are thinking of," said Miss Langton, with a queer little smile. "You must hear me out now.

"We were to have been married when he left Oxford—with a respectable degree—but then came my father's illness and death. Gerald was not then of age, and endless difficulties had to be settled first about his property. You know he is a large landowner in the west of Ireland. That Irish estate was the great trouble of my father's life. Lady Adare positively refused to live there or to join in establishing a trustworthy agent there. Lord Adare's will had left everything in her power till Gerald should come of age. We went to Castle Adare for one summer, and came back saddened to the heart by what we found there. Grinding poverty, oppression, degrading pauperism—it drove my father wild to feel his hands were tied. He could do nothing. Lady Adare was stolidly indifferent. My only comfort was in Gerald's promises : 'We will work together there, Maudie. Only wait till I have the power and you to teach me how to use it.'

"Castle Adare is a black spot on the face of the country yet.

"We should have married on his coming of age, but Lady Adare fell ill—I don't say she did it on purpose, but it happened opportunely, and Gerald was sent for. She didn't die, only kept him

wandering about the Continent with her for three years; losing his time, his money, and all that makes a man's life worth living—his sense of duty to his country and his fellow creatures. She died, and he was delivered from the deadliest of small tyrannies—that of a narrow nature over a generous spirit. Then he came back to me.

"He had written from Germany begging that nothing now might delay our marriage—that it might take place as soon after his return as possible—he had grown superstitious, and so, indeed, had I, as to the result of a third postponement. So all was in readiness; dresses, breakfast, settlements, everything in readiness for his return two days before the wedding. He would hardly let me out of his sight when he came at last. I see his face now as he stood at the foot of the staircase the night before, looking up after me: 'Good night,' he called, and something else which I did not hear; I turned to listen, slipped somehow, and then I remember a long, long space of time, when I felt myself falling and heard the ringing crash on the marble floor of the lamp I carried before the shock came and all was blank blackness. They said it was an injury to the brain; then some internal displacement; it was spine, nerves; I don't know what. I only knew in the short flashes of consciousness between long intervals of speechless torture, that they gave me very little longer to live. Never mind the story of that black time. I don't want to trade on your sympathies."

Imogen stole one tiny hand into Miss Langton's, but kept silence.

"Gerald behaved *perfectly*. Ah! my dear, think what it must have been to both of us when the terrible discovery was made that I was going *to live*. If I had died, he had it in him to be faithful to my memory, and I, dead, might pray that on earth my love might live again for him in the heart of some woman, stronger or nobler than I; but could I hold him bound to me, living? I forced his freedom on him and sent him from me. You would have done the same had you been the crushed, maimed, half-dead creature I was then. I bid him never to return unless I sent for him, and he has obeyed me.

"Do you know Dr. Julius Cope? He is a countryman of yours. Charletan or none, his cures have been marvellous, and I resolved to try him. In six months I could use my arms, in three more raise myself; now I can walk a few steps, and in a year he says I shall be as well and strong as ever I was in my life."

"Does he know—Lord Adare?"

"No. The new hope was too slender and precious to share even with him. I have written now and then, telling him nothing till I could tell him all. Last week I wrote, in dread, and yet hopelessness of what his answer would be, and—the letter is here still," and she pointed to the pillow of her couch.

"Oh, why, *why* did you not send it?" cried Imogen, a ring of pain in her voice.

"Because Dr. Cope has just returned from Paris. He met you there—and Gerald, and told me what he had heard. See, I had given him up, as I had only pretended to do before I had crushed out my last little flickering hope that life was not all over for me, when you came to me. Surely, I said, providence gives me one chance more, if I can stoop to beg my lover back from her. Give him to me, Imogen; you are young—beautiful—happy in your home. There are better men in the world than Gerald. What is a lover more or less to you? But in taking him you take away my all."

So she pleaded with an impetuous rush of words that checked all reply from Imogen. The two girls had clasped hands and were silent for an instant, Maud from exhaustion, Imogen seeking for words, a melancholy little smile flittering across her pretty lips.

"How do I know that he is my lover? He has never told me so, and shall never be tempted to do so. I think I could have *made* him love me, perhaps; and I should have liked to try—but Maud, I never could have loved him as you do. Send your letter, dear, and let me go home to write mine. Here, take and read this; it is all that has ever passed between us," and she tossed the crimson-sealed envelope into Maud's lap.

Everard stirred, yawned, sat up suddenly. "Imogen! Miss Langton! What *have* I been doing?"

"No harm, dear uncle, the carriage has only just come to the door, and Miss Langton and I have been very happy."

"Why it is clear," cried Everard, rising and drawing a full breath.

"And starlight," said Imogen. "You said there were limits to every fog, and light and freedom on the other side of it. Good-bye, Maudie."

"God bless you, Imogen."

DAME URSULA'S TREASURE.

IF unkept walks, trailing, neglected creepers, and a heavy overgrowth of ivy are the essentials of the picturesque, Clovis Court presented them all. There were box trees that had formerly represented pyramids, garden seats, and lively crowing cocks—but the hands that pruned them were gone, and the spectator now only saw ragged and untidy foliage. The bowling-green, once like velvet, had added nettles and thistles to its own rank crop. Could one of the beauties who a century ago bowled there have seen it, she would have picked up her dainty skirts and fled.

A beauty of a century later stands amongst the desolation. What a picture is the auburn-haired maiden leaning against an old, weather-beaten sun-dial! Simply clad in a dark grey dress, a bunch of pale yellow chrysanthemums carelessly fixed near the throat, her white little hands clasped before her, Ursula Baring looked sadly over the waste.

True loveliness seldom rests long unseen, and a large rift in the brick wall displayed our heroine to the gaze of a young man who was riding slowly past. It was but a minute's work to dismount, secure the bridle to a convenient tree, and scale the broken wall. With heightened colour and quick steps, which caused the fair maiden to turn with a startled blush, Guy Norman reached the sun-dial.

"Mr. Norman! why are you here?"

"Because *you* are here," replied the young man coolly, and at the same time firmly securing one of the little white hands.

"But," demurred Ursula, feebly trying to re-possess herself of her hand, "we are forbidden to meet. Your uncle ——"

"Is an old reptile! Ursie, be sensible! They keep us apart, heaven knows, cleverly enough! let us be happy, my darling, while we have the chance."

The girl's face paled—she trembled and looked down. "Guy, I love you—oh! indeed, I love you! but my mother *trusts* me. She said your uncle had told her he could not hear of anything between us; and we are very proud, Guy!"

The young man dropped her hand hastily.

"You don't love as I do, or uncles and mothers would be nothing to you," he said haughtily.

Ursula looked up with her lovely, tremulous gaze of love.

"Uncles, perhaps not! but *mothers*, Guy! What are girls good for who do not love and honour mothers like mine?"

A handsome, winning face stooped to her own, and begged forgiveness. They had been plighted lovers a week ago, and the break which prudent counsels had made was so recent, I will beg you to

forgive my Ursula who yielded her lovely lips to kiss those waiting for them. It was brief bliss, though, for she heard a voice calling her.

"Good-bye, my darling," murmured the lover, "we will surmount our troubles yet."

"Oh, for Dame Ursula's treasure!" sighed the modern Ursula, as, half laughing, she sped away to the cottage across the road.

For to live in Clovis Court without a retinue of servants and a huge bill for repairs were impossibilities; so the widowed Mrs. Baring, her lovely Ursula, and a younger daughter, helpless through spinal disease, lived with one old servant in a little cottage which overlooked their ruined inheritance.

Tea was over, and Ursula knelt by the invalid's sofa. "Nora, darling, it is so hard, so hard!" she sobbed, leaning her head against her sister's hand. How tenderly that gentle hand caressed her!

"Take heart, my dearest, something will happen yet to help you!"

Ursula raised her tearful face with an attempt at a smile.

"Do you mean Dame Ursula's treasure?" at which Nora laughed softly, for nothing seemed further off than that. Now some fifty years before this date Clovis Court was the dwelling place of the rich Dame Ursula Baring. She amassed riches year by year for her only child, a son, who had gone abroad, and she meant to make him wealthy and prosperous on his return. One sad day Dame Ursula had tidings that her son was dead. She immediately became demented and lived in a wild sort of dream for a year, and then died suddenly. Then came news that the son had left a wife and little boy to mourn him, and search was made for the property. Previous to her death the old dame had converted all she could into money, and now not a penny piece could be found for her rightful heirs! The excitement became great, and certain dishonest and adventurous persons had surreptitiously raised and opened Dame Ursula's coffin, thinking she had tried to take her wealth with her; all in vain. In queer writing, done with her diamond ring on a window in her bed-room (the ring was missing now), were the words: "Time will show where my treasure lies."

At the end of fifty years her lovely great-granddaughter Ursula, could not wed the man she loved because he depended on the will of an uncle, and she had nothing. The widowed mother had allowed as many excavations to take place at Clovis Court as could happen without bringing down the walls; then she devoted herself with great thrift to living on the next to nothing she had, and interested herself in poultry, pigs, and repairing linen. She did not moan over her fortunes, and tried to make her girls cheerful and happy, succeeding admirably until that terrible fellow "Love" appeared.

Guy Norman was packed off to the Continent just as the dull winter days set in. Ursula could not bear to think of Christmas, and hated helping to make plum-puddings with a sore heart. She was so

pitiful in appearance one day that Nora begged her to go for a walk, and not make the pudding salt with tears!

Glad to escape, Ursula hurried out into the wintry road. Everything looked dull and grey, and the girl after walking briskly for a time, turned by a side path into the garden of the deserted court. She wandered past the stately windows; then, with a natural inclination for everything as dismal as herself, she resolved to explore the old house. Fetching a key, she let herself in and paused a moment, startled by the echo of her own footfall in the weird silence; then she passed boldly on, determined to see old Dame Ursula's room. A quaint, low-roofed place, with lattice windows—an old four-post bedstead still stood there with faded, damp hangings of blue. Our Ursula was earnestly gazing on the lines engraved on the window, "Time will show where my treasure lies," when she saw a herd of cattle getting into the garden through the broken wall. There was not much to spoil, truly, but a sense of order made Ursula resolve to try and dismiss the intruders.

Quickly she ran out into the passage and sped down-stairs; seizing her umbrella she valiantly waved it as she appeared in the garden, and great consternation occurred. The cattle ran hither and thither, and none turned towards the gap in the wall. They ran against each other and everything else, but finally they were induced to go, and Ursula, looking over the débris of a battle-field where she had come off victorious, found that the old sun-dial was broken down. In real sorrow—for this had been a trysting spot where Guy and she had passed many a pleasant "greeting fair"—she ran towards it: then stopped and turned pale with excitement. There was a large hollow beneath where the sun-dial had stood, and in it were mouldy-looking bags and boxes!

It was getting dusk now, and Ursula ran swiftly home. "Mother —Nora—leave your puddings! Come, mother, to the court, for the —the—treasure is found!" The speech ended in sobs and laughter. Mrs. Baring and Nora thought she was demented, and looked solemnly at each other. Only the old servant shrewdly asked:

"And where is it, Miss Ursula, dear?"

"Under the sun-dial; some cows knocked it down."

"'Time,'" cried Nora excitedly, "'time will show,' the old dame said. Oh, mother, Martha, go at once."

And they went—and found such riches as they had never dreamed of. All the country called at the cottage, the cruel uncle recalled the luckless lover, a marriage took place while mistletoe boughs were hanging still green, and now Guy and Ursula have settled to a country life, and Ursula takes personal delight in her dairy. Her husband declares she is in danger of actually worshipping the cow, in oriental fashion, so great is her gratitude for the discovery of Dame Ursula's Treasure.

MINNIE DOUGLAS.

CLEON.

IN commencing this sketch of some of my earlier years, I feel like an artist who takes up his pencil to draw an old picture from memory. The outlines stand forth clear and distinct: they are too closely intermingled with my after life to have faded in any way from memory: but whether the delicate shading of thought and feeling will come back at my call, remains to be seen. There is, however, one face about whose every feature my pencil must so love to linger that other neighbouring objects may connect themselves with it, and thus help to form the whole.

I well remember that first evening at St. Russell's when some score lads, myself among them, had grouped themselves in all sorts of free-and-easy attitudes around the wide fire-place at one end of the old entrance-hall. It was a breathing-space, when the lessons for the next day were done and we were waiting for supper. There was a confused, but by no means harmonious din of many voices; from the shrill treble of the little ten-year-old lad, who had just begun his school life, to the deeper bass of the senior boy, who looked, with a feeling of regret mingling with his ambitions for the future, on the little world where he had fought his battles and won his victories.

It was a time when individual character, as yet unshackled by the restraints of after life, showed itself freely. In the warmest place and most comfortable position, half sat and half lay Reginald Crawdon, the longest, laziest, and what did not count much there, the greatest aristocrat in the school: a lad whom everybody liked: from the youngest boy who probably worshipped him, and would come to him in all his scrapes, to the head master himself, who quieted the scruples of conscience at work not got out of him by reflecting that the stored-up energies which assuredly were sleeping within were only waiting the more powerful circumstances of after life to develop.

On the opposite side of the hearth stood Bolton, a lad whom I may most readily describe as being the antipodes of Crawdon. He was that most hateful of all school-boy characters—a bully—with every attribute belonging to that character. There was not a boy in the school but disliked him, and, unfortunately for his peace, there was always ample opportunity for revenge in his easily-provoked temper. He had a most jealous regard for his own dignity, and the slightest ridicule would send him into a fit of ungovernable rage. This weakness, of course, was often taken advantage of, and to work Bolton up to boiling-point was the occasion of keen enjoyment to not a few. The night when I commence my story, he had been having a stiff round with a lad whom we had christened Tommyhawk—in

consideration both of his general appearance and precocious sharpness—and he had come off decidedly worsted.

The whole lot of us had been interested by the tidings that a new boy was coming in the middle of the term. He was expected that evening, and there were many conjectures as to who he was and where he came from, for no information on these points had reached us.

Bolton, however, professed to have heard part of a conversation between the Doctor and one of the masters, in which no very favourable allusions were made to the new-comer. His information was received for the most part with a curious interest; but there were a few, and amongst them Crawdon, Tommyhawk, and myself, who coupled the vagueness of his report with his well-known jealousy of any stranger, and were inclined to look upon this as one of his many fabrications. I suppose our faces must have betrayed us, for he launched into still stronger abuse of the unknown boy, and possibly said more in his growing anger than he at first intended. I had been sitting in a quiet corner with a book, and until the discussion grew hot had not paid much attention to it.

My natural disposition generally prompted me to keep outside all rows, if I could honourably do so; but to-night, the absurdity and injustice of the whole affair, besides the strong suspicion that Bolton had been colouring the Doctor's words to suit his own purpose, roused me to unwonted heat. I was just turning to give expression to my feeling, when there was a sound of carriage-wheels outside. The door was opened, we heard a low, clear voice give some directions to the driver, and then—on the door-step, with the dim light of the hall-lamp falling full on his face and figure—stood the stranger.

I often thought afterwards of the peculiar hush that fell on us boys. Even Crawdon seemed to loose his look of lazy indifference as he gazed curiously and earnestly at the new-comer. As for me, my thoughts wandered off to the realm of myths, and I began wondering what form Apollo really did take in the imagination of those beauty-loving old heathens!

He was a somewhat tall boy, well-built, with a regal head and shoulders that instinctively impressed you with a sense of power. We were all struck, I think, by the intense pride and haughtiness of his face. It appeared in every feature. In the evidently natural curve of his lip as he answered some enquiries which one of the masters was putting to him, and then in the cool steady look which he turned on us boys before going to the Doctor; a look which made most of the others drop their eyes and become suddenly conscious that they had been staring very hard. But strangely—for in most cases I should have been the first to follow their example—my gaze seemed riveted upon him, and our eyes met for what could in reality have been only a second. Yet it seemed longer, and somehow I felt as though we were not quite strangers after it.

Of course there was a strong re-action after he had gone. Both his looks and manner were the subject of free comment, and the general opinion was not favourable. Even Crawdon's good-nature failed him. He admitted the fineness of the face, but said there was an expression about it which was certainly not inviting. Tommyhawk suggested to me in a low aside, that there would be some fine rows now we had got another temper to match Bolton's, and he thought the latter would get the worst of it; the new fellow looked as though he might prove a risky customer to tackle. Most of the other boys in one way or another echoed the same sentiment. There had been a something in his look which had roused a general spirit of rebellion.

I listened almost in silence, for I could not join in the conversation. It was impossible to deny the justice of the remarks made, and yet I felt a strange leaning towards the other side. It might be some lingering resentment of Bolton's first attack, or a natural weakness for siding with the minority, but I certainly had a presentiment that in any of the future disturbances, I should take the part of the new-comer.

Bolton expressed his intention of putting the fellow down at once, so as to save trouble afterwards, and Crawdon was advising him to wait awhile until he knew better what he had to deal with, when the stranger himself walked down the hall with one of the masters. The latter just introduced him as Cleon Stanley, and went away.

Our greetings met with but scant ceremony. The boy certainly answered them, but his replies were curt, and his eyes meanwhile took a swift comprehensive glance at the faces of his future companions, ending up with my own. As our looks met for a second time, I thought his became keen and searching as though he would read my soul to see whether he might trust me. My face must have answered him, for there flashed a sudden, softer, better light in his eyes as he turned away.

He moved towards a vacant seat near the fire, evidently meaning to take it; but Bolton, with a pretended shiver, slipped into it himself, remarking that it was an awfully cold night, and really that was the only warm place in the hall.

Cleon Stanley looked at him for a second, as though he would see whether the rudeness were intentional; but as Bolton's face gave no clue, he turned away and sat down on the other side of the hearth, taking a book from his pocket, and beginning to read by the firelight.

I had been strongly tempted to interfere with what I knew to be intended rudeness, but the risk of rousing Bolton still more and making him do worse: and a doubt too, of whether the new fellow would thank me for my help: prevented me.

The usual talk and laughter went on again with most of the boys, but a few of us seemed, somehow, to be waiting for the next move. There was a something in the air which we all felt must come sooner

or later, and the expression of Bolton's face seemed to promise that it would not be much later.

The flicker of the firelight fell on the book Cleon was reading as he sat with his head half-turned away. I quietly studied the face, thinking that many would not care to rouse the spirit which had left its marks there. But fools will run where angels fear to tread, and Bolton's familiar would evidently give him no rest until he had made good his promise.

With another exclamation at the coldness of the night, and the poor chance there was of keeping warm if we let the fire out, he took up a pan of coals which stood near, and throwing the contents on the fire, completely extinguished every particle of light.

Cleon turned and looked his tormentor full in the face, and there was a sound of contempt more than of anger in his voice as he said: "Is there anything else you would like besides my seat and my light?" Then, turning to the others: "I should be sorry to cause any disturbance here the first night. If I had known the sort of welcome you gave to strangers, I would have consulted my own inclinations and kept away, but I supposed common civility would be expected. I see you dispense with it. That won't hurt me; and all I ask is to be let alone. I think even your amiable friend would find it the safer plan to take a hint in time."

Whilst speaking he had risen to his feet and stood facing us with one arm resting carelessly on the low chimney-piece.

There was silence for a few seconds when he had done. I think most of them felt a little ashamed, even though something in his speech roused their anger.

Then Crawdon got up and said he believed it was not their usual custom to insult a stranger, he thought an apology was due from Bolton for his uncourteous behaviour, and he hoped he would give it at once and put an end to the affair. I got up to second him, and told Bolton what I thought of his ungenerous conduct to a stranger.

The hot indignation which had been gradually growing within me, seemed to carry me out of myself, and the others were not much more surprised than I was at the height it had gained. As I got up from my seat, I had glanced at Cleon, and his look of proud indifferance had wavered for a moment, but I did not look again. When I had done speaking, a feeling of awkwardness at the position in which I had placed myself—the uncertainty as to how the stranger might take my extreme championship—came over me, and I walked up to an open window at the far end of the hall. I could hear in the distance, how Bolton was forced into making a lame apology; how Stanley put both the apology and the need for it on one side, as though such an one as Bolton could not possibly offend him. Then the short firm steps crossed the hall, a hand was on my shoulder, and I turned to look up into what I instantly felt was *my friend's* face.

"Thank you for taking my side to-night," he said, in a low, quiet

voice. "I did not deserve it. I had no right to let that fellow provoke me and spoil your evening. He was not worth it. But I am afraid there is hot blood in my veins, which will never help me to stand interference. However, I can scarcely regret it all, as it has shown me a friend. But I must honestly tell you that it may not always be safe to take my side; perhaps you would be wiser never to do so again!" Yet, while he said the words, the pressure of his hand on my shoulder grew firmer, and there was a half-proud, half-longing look in his eyes.

I could not quite tell at the time what was coming over me. A feeling of great sympathy for this isolated boy, whom I had known only a few minutes, filled my heart, and even brought tears to my eyes, as I said hurriedly: "I shall always take your side," and then walked away, afraid to yield myself to this new and strange influence.

The words I then uttered, and the vow that was then registered on my soul, proved the chisel which afterwards shaped my whole life. It did not always influence outward circumstances, but its power was supreme: entire in that immortal life of thought and feeling of which outward circumstances are but auxiliaries. We yielded to each other that night a friendship which has never once wavered through long years. It seemed strange afterwards that my life could ever have been complete without him, so naturally did he take and so faithfully has he kept the chief place in it since.

The other boys, of course, used to chaff us, and would have called us as usual David and Jonathan, if they could only have found in Cleon the least resemblance to either; but they could not, so we were rechristened David and Goliath; and I believe the prevailing opinion was that we had about as much in common as they and an equal right to go together.

Those happy two years at school do not seem so far away as they really are, because I experienced more in that short time than I have done in many other years of my life. But there is one period which claims precedence over the rest because of its great and painful interest to me, both at the time and long afterwards. It was my last Christmas there, and about a dozen of us had gone in for a final examination, which would make the successful competitor the head of the school, and also considerably smooth his way to college in regard to pecuniary matters, as several grants would fall to his share.

I do not think the latter motive often influenced us; it was more the honour, the glory of the thing. To be head boy at St. Russell's was no trifling matter.

Opinions were divided as to who would head the list, though the majority were for Cleon and myself. We were certain to be bracketed together, the boys said: they were sure neither of us would have it, if it were not divided.

However, we all worked our hardest. My parents were very anxious that I should get it. I was their only son, and my father

had taken it at the same school years before; so he wanted, he said, to keep it in the family. Cleon was the only one who seemed to have no desire for it, though it was so likely to fall to his share. The necessary work required no extra exertion on his part; much of it appeared merely pastime to him; he was acknowledged, even by those who disliked him, to be the cleverest boy in the school.

I have said by those who disliked him. I scarcely think there was one there who liked, or even dared to like him. His manner had, to the rest, lost not one iota of its first hauteur and pride. Even the masters, ay, and the Doctor himself, were treated with a respectful indifference which rendered anything like familiarity impossible. They were compelled to keep a certain distance, and I think all regarded him as a puzzle hard to unravel. He commanded their respect always with their dislike.

But there was one there who felt the keenest hatred towards him, and that one was Bolton. The ridicule and contempt of the first evening had never been forgotten, and his rage had ever been kept at boiling point by the utter impossibility of revenge. Cleon always looked upon him as so totally unworthy of notice, that whatever Bolton in his spite and malice could invent was allowed to pass without the slightest comment. Beyond a certain point he never went, for there was a sleeping lion in Cleon which the bravest never cared to arouse; and Bolton was both a coward and a sneak.

For a week or two before the examination he suddenly dropped all his minor unpleasantness, and we concluded, as he was one of the competitors, that he had found something better to occupy his thoughts. It was a time of real, earnest work, and the nearer the day approached the more we tried to cram, until I believe the Doctor was thankful for some of us when the preparatory work was over.

Most of the papers were written by the Doctor and different masters, excepting one on mathematics, which had been prepared specially by one of the foremost mathematicians of the day, and a special prize was to go with it. It was the first time such a thing had occurred, and of course added double zest to our efforts.

Cleon laughed at my eagerness, and said it was quite unnecessary for me to work so hard; no one else was likely to get it. I told him it only depended on his will, though I believed there was a possibility of Bolton's succeeding.

"Not without he gets a chance of seeing the original in the Doctor's study and copies the answer," was his reply, as we both went in to prayers.

I should probably have forgotten his words in a few moments, but just as we passed into the room, I saw Seldon, one of Bolton's chief friends, standing close to us, half-hidden by the shadow of the door. From the expression on his face he had evidently heard all we had said. For some time I felt uncomfortable, but by the next day, which was *the* day, I had forgotton all about it.

About ten the next morning we all took our places in the long school-room. The desks were arranged at measured distances, and only one boy was to occupy each, to prevent anything like copying. The Doctor might have had some suspicion of Cleon and me, for we sat at opposite ends of the room. Of course there was perfect quiet, and nothing whatever to distract our thoughts.

I finished the home papers and then took up the all-important problem. The first glance showed me that I should have no difficulty in working it, and I knew it would be equally easy to Cleon; for, curiously enough, we had hit on something similar the day before. Cleon had made out a problem of his own, to find employment, he said, for the unnecessary energy I was throwing into the work, and it was strangely like the one given us. Of course I set to work, delighted at our prospective success, and had just finished, when I started to feel a hand on my shoulder and to hear one of the masters bidding me go to the Doctor's study at once.

I do not know why it was, but I seemed to hear a troubled echo after his words; and the shadow of a malicious smile which I saw flicker across Bolton's face as I rose to obey, did not lessen the impression.

Like someone just awakening out of a pleasant dream and then passing off into one of equal unpleasantness, I walked to the Doctor's room. Not a suspicion of the truth occurred to me, as I knocked at the door. "Come in," was the reply, and I entered.

The Doctor was standing by a table, and with him a gentleman who was a stranger to me, and the expression of whose face was one of unmitigated contempt. The Doctor's bore the same, but there was a strong element of sorrow mingled with it. In his hand was a book, which I instantly recognised as the one in which Cleon and I had worked out all our problems, and which I had last seen in Cleon's room.

"This book is yours, Vincent?" said the Doctor, in a painfully distinct voice.

"Yes, sir, it is," I replied; for it lay open with my name, Frederic Vincent, written in Cleon's bold hand at the bottom of the page.

"You were using it yesterday?" he continued.

"Yes, sir," I answered, feeling more and more perplexed, and wondering, in a vague sort of way, what was coming next. But my wonderment was soon to be turned into a certainty that seemed at first to make the blood stand still in my veins, and then rush madly on in hottest indignation.

The Doctor opened the book at another place, and taking up a paper which was lying between the leaves, he unfolded it, and showed me the answer to our prize problem, accurately worked out, and bearing the signature of the gentleman who had drawn it up.

A dim idea of the truth began to dawn on my mind; but still I was so very sure I had had no hand in the matter, and it seemed so utterly

impossible that they should ever suspect *me* of such a thing, that a troubled surprise was my uppermost feeling. Both gentlemen looked at me as though waiting for an answer.

"I know nothing of this; I have never seen this paper before," I said, looking up.

The Doctor's brow grew heavier as he replied: "The sin of deceit is quite enough to lie at your door without adding that of untruth to it. If the evidence had not been so complete, *you* would never have been suspected, Vincent. This paper was missed, and found, accidentally, in your book. Yet I should not say accidentally; these things are never the result of accident. It was not by mere chance that Bolton mistook this book for his own when he came to show me some work I had given him to do, and which he thought would be in here. Oh! Vincent, what mad impulse possessed you?"

I had stood all this time as though turned to stone, but the silence roused me.

"It's a lie, sir! I have never seen that paper until now, and it has been placed in my book by hands that had first taken it from here."

"Silence!" was the reply. "You forget yourself. The facts speak only too clearly for themselves. There is one test we can put it to: your paper shall be sent for and we will see if there is any resemblance between the two."

"I can tell you," I answered quickly, feeling utterly helpless under such adverse circumstances. "My paper will be found just the same, but for all that it is no copy!"

"That is conclusive," was the Doctor's answer. "You are quick at mathematics, Vincent, but that problem was certainly more than you could possibly work in the short space of time you have had. You had better go to your room. The whole affair is inexpressibly painful to me, and it does not end here: there is the other half sheet of this paper somewhere, but in whose possession we have yet to know."

I left the room, grieved, indignant, and utterly bewildered. That someone had wickedly planned this disgrace for me, I was obliged to believe, and yet it seemed so thoroughly cruel and uncalled-for, that I hardly cared, even in thought, to lay it at anyone's door. And though the fact of Bolton's finding it would keep running through my mind, I could scarcely tolerate such a suspicion even of him.

I spent a most wretched hour in my room. My thoughts were in a complete tumult. I wondered what they would think at home, whether they would believe my side; though if the apparent facts of the case had not been so strong against me I should never have doubted.

Then came the thought of Cleon, and with it a shadow of peace. I felt, I knew, he would keep his faith in me. I was just longing to hear his indignant voice say, "It's all a lie, Fred, and I'll soon know who is its author," when there was a sound of footsteps on the stairs. The examination was over and the boys were coming out. I listened

for Cleon's step, but it didn't come. There was a heavy shuffle instead, and presently a knock at my door. Then the handle was turned, and Seldon, Bolton's friend, entered.

"What do you want here?" I asked in an uncivil tone. For answer he gave me the full development of the evil smile I had seen dawning on Bolton's face; then replied:

"I only came to say you needn't feel so awfully cut up; the Doctor wants to see you presently, and will make it all right."

"What!" I exclaimed, feeling as though I had passed into some new creation. "What do you say? Have they really found out who did it?"

"Yes," he answered, that smile expanding more and more.

"Well! Why can't you speak? Who was the cowardly sneak?"

"Cleon," he replied with a low "Ha! ha!" that would have become a very demon.

How I looked at that moment, I cannot say, but I have a vague recollection of feeling as though every force in my nature had suddenly received tenfold its usual strength, and all had joined together in one mighty rush against one person, and that Seldon. Whether I threw him out of the room and then kicked him downstairs, or kicked him out of the room and threw him downstairs I do not know, and scarcely knew then. But it was one of the two, for there he lay at the bottom of the first flight, and did not offer to stir; not even when I had cooled down enough to go and see if he were hurt. Crawdon came up at that moment, but his face bore no look of congratulation, and he seemed rather to hesitate when he saw me, as though he would have preferred going back; but he couldn't well do that; and, besides, he had observed Seldon.

"What's amiss with him?" he asked, walking up.

"Why, I believe I kicked him downstairs, the wretch—but he was scarcely worth the effort, and I don't think I should have done it if he had not said what he did about Cleon. What do you think he dared to say?" I asked, looking at Crawdon, whose manner struck me as strange. "What do you suppose was his and Bolton's last invention?"

Instead of answering, he gave Seldon another kick which soon brought him to his feet, and before he had time to speak he laid his hand heavily on his shoulder and said: "If you speak another word, you coward, I'll send you down the next flight. Take your fiendish pleasure in gloating over another's misery somewhere else—you shall not get it here."

There was something in Crawdon's indignant look which frightened him; he shook the hand off his shoulder, and walked rapidly away. We both watched him out of sight, and stood a minute longer as though unwilling to reopen the conversation. At last Crawdon put his hand on my arm, and with a new hesitancy in his voice, and still without looking me in the face, said:

"Shall we go into your room, Vincent? There is something I must tell you."

When we were inside and the key was turned in the lock, he walked up to the window and stood with his back to me whilst he told me. Told me that about half-an-hour after I had been called out of the school-room the Doctor entered it and said that the prize paper had been taken out of his study and copied. Half the sheet he had found, the other half was to be searched for. Everyone there must turn out his pockets as a preliminary step, and those who were innocent would overlook what at another time might seem an indignity, for the sake of discovering the guilty one.

Each boy obeyed, beginning at my end of the room. No paper was found until Cleon's desk was reached, and *he* drew out of his pocket the other half-sheet, and gave it with a look of unmitigated surprise to the Doctor. But that surprise was apparently increased when the Doctor spoke.

"This proves what I was still hoping to find untrue. Frederic Vincent's name in his own hand-writing is here; the other half-sheet was found in his book. His examination paper is almost an exact copy of it—now show me yours. I had not thought that the friendship between you would lead to mutual evil instead of good."

Crawdon said that as Cleon gathered the full meaning of the Doctor's words, the look of surprise on his face was replaced by one of fixed determination, as though some sudden purpose had entered his mind which he would hold to at all hazards. He handed his paper to the Doctor, and said:

"You will find that equally like the original, but you have not arrived at the truth of the matter yet. Vincent did not take that paper, nor has he ever seen it. *I* took it and I put the other half-sheet in his book."

The Doctor stood with the rest of them speechless with surprise for awhile; then said, as a new thought struck him:

"But Vincent's name is here in his own hand-writing; it must be as I said: you are both implicated."

A shadow of pain, Crawdon said, passed over Cleon's face; then he went on in that clear, low voice of his which could be heard all down the room:

"I wrote Vincent's name on that paper." And he took out his pocket book and showed many copies of my signature, quite as good as that on the paper.

But the Doctor refused to believe it, he said there could be no possible explanation of it, excepting that he had wished to shield himself at the expense of his friend. And then with a passing look of horror on his face, as though the very thought were hideous to him, Cleon hesitated a moment and then declared it was so; he had done it to shield himself.

When Crawdon had finished speaking, he turned to me with a look

of pity that nearly drove me wild. I knew, of course, that it was all a mistake; Cleon had done this to shield me. I would stop him as he came upstairs, and we would talk it all over. And then I heard his step. In an instant I had unlocked the door and flung it wide.

"Cleon! Cleon! come in," I cried, as he reached the top of the stairs. "I want to talk this affair over, and find out who has been to blame. Don't you think ——"

But he passed quickly by me, his head bent and his face pale, and I heard him turn the key of his door when he got inside. Then I asked Crawdon to leave me to think it all over, and I assured him as he was going that my confidence in Cleon was unshaken and would remain so until everything was cleared up, or even if things never were cleared up. And I think I spoke the truth, but it became a hard trial. The Doctor sent for me to his study, and seemed fully assured of my innocence; but about the way in which that innocence had been proved he said little; perhaps to spare my feelings, perhaps, because he could understand it as little as I.

Towards evening I went down into the hall. Cleon was standing by the window, on the very spot where I had that first night promised to take his side. His words about its not always being safe, flashed across my mind again, but directly following them came the remembrance of my inward vow, that, come what would, we must hold together. In an instant I should have been at Cleon's side, but he knew my step, and before I had time to utter a word, he turned and walked swiftly past me, and away upstairs into his room.

It was so sudden, so unexpected, that I felt stupefied and made no attempt to follow him, but stood by the window, looking out on the frost and the moonlight, until prayers called us all together.

The prizes were to be given at the end of the week, and then in a few more days we should all be at home. I was going on to Oxford after the holidays. Cleon, I knew, was going away for good as well, but he was not going to college, and our paths would separate.

That was without doubt the most miserable week I have ever spent in my life. Cleon and I never once spoke to each other. He avoided me all the time and yet I often saw on his cold, proud face a look of intense pain when I passed close by him, or came anywhere near him. Even his lip would quiver. But he always turned away his head or moved in another direction. Towards the end of the week this got almost intolerable, and I felt there must be a change of some kind soon, or I should break down altogether. No doubt the physical re-action consequent on the over-mental exertion of the past few months had done something to weaken my nerve.

On the Thursday Bolton got a letter, saying that his father was taken suddenly and dangerously ill, and he must hasten home at once. There was much wondering as to whether he would be able to get back in time for the distribution of the prizes, but on Friday the Doctor had a black-edged envelope brought to him whilst in the

school-room. It contained the announcement of the death of Bolton's father and a note from Bolton himself. He took out the announcement and read it to us, saying a few words of sympathy on behalf of the absent boy. Then we saw him open the note and commence reading it. Suddenly he made some quick exclamation, glanced quickly at Cleon, who was sitting with his head bent over a book, and left the room.

Of course everyone wondered what was up. We all hoped something might be said at dinner-time, but the Doctor never made his appearance; and as that afternoon had been fixed for distributing the prizes, and the parents and friends of the pupils were expected to be present, we concluded his time might have been fully occupied.

The appointed hour came at last, and we all gathered in the two large school-rooms, the partitions between them having been removed and both thrown into one. One end was crowded with visitors, and at the other sat the Doctor and the different masters, a table filled with costly books before them. On a stand by itself were two first prizes, the meaning of which we had yet to learn.

We boys sat in long rows to the right and left of the Doctor, the candidates for the final exam. half on one side and half on the other. I do not know whether it was intentional or not, but all our places had been pointed out to us, and Cleon and I were placed directly opposite each other. I was surprised to see him there at all, but the Doctor had sent word that he wished it. We were all sitting waiting for the usual preliminaries, when the Doctor got up, and, after a little hesitation, said he had that morning received a letter which had given him both pain and pleasure and also somewhat perplexed him. The writer had requested that it might be read aloud, and he was now going to accede to that request. The circumstances connected with it would not be known to anyone outside the school, but should be explained afterwards.

Then to our surprise he took from his pocket Bolton's note, and without further preface, read it through. The intense excitement that prevailed on all sides may well be imagined, but it was in no-wise lessened when the Doctor had finished reading. Bolton began the note by alluding to his recent loss, and speaking of the better influence it had had on his thoughts and feelings. He confessed his wicked hatred of myself and Cleon, and his fixed determination to end our friendship, if possible; and to that end he had contrived the plan of taking the original copy of the problem out of the study, putting one half in my book, and after copying my signature on the other, contriving to get it in the pocket of a coat he knew Cleon would be likely to wear on the day of the examination.

He saw his plan succeed, but in a manner very different from his anticipations. Cleon's noble resolve to take all the blame on himself and shield his friend, even at the risk of being thought unfaithful, had shown his own conduct in darker colours, and proved too, that

a friendship, such as that which existed between Cleon and myself, would take a stronger power than he possessed to sever. He concluded with many humble, and I believe real expressions of regret for his conduct, and asked the forgiveness of those chiefly concerned in it.

I remember after it was over, feeling one great thrill of pleasure, then I knew the boys were all longing to get up and cheer. The Doctor cleared his voice again, and taking up one of the prize volumes, he called to Cleon to come up. I watched him cross the room with all his usual quiet indifferent manner, but without once looking at me. Then the Doctor's voice which seemed to sound a very long way off, said:

"This prize is yours, Cleon; the other is for Vincent. We have decided to award a prize to both of you. Your papers were too equal to make any distinction possible. Your friendship has been noble and generous, though the highest motives can never make it right to tell a lie. But I feel I cannot blame you as perhaps I ought."

Here he suddenly broke off, and three loud cheers for David and Goliath rang through the room, but even they sounded far away to me. Someone said, "Look at Vincent!" Then I saw Cleon drop all the books on the floor, spring forward, and that was all.

Those who stood near told me afterwards that the coldness and pride died out of his face, and his lip quivered painfully, but he said never a word; only lifted me up as gently as my mother might have done, and carried me out of the room, setting his foot straight on the top of one of the prizes as he went.

When I came to myself I was lying on my bed, and the first thing I saw was Cleon's face, and the look that was on it. And then—it may have been girlish, I dare say it was, but I could not have helped myself—I threw both arms round his neck, and sobbed till the bed shook again. He kept perfectly quiet for a long time, and then said in a low, soft voice, which was never heard except when he was greatly moved: "I say, old fellow, I don't want to be drowned."

That roused me, I released him and tried to sit up alone, but found I could not; the strain of the past week had been too much; my strength gave way, and I had to drop my head on the pillow again.

For nearly a week after that I lay there, with Cleon for my nurse. The Doctor wrote home and told them there was no occasion for alarm; I had overtaxed my strength, but would be all right again in a day or two, and so we were left alone together. At the end of the week, we said Good-bye, and each for the time went his separate way, but strong in a friendship that the chances and changes of life—and they were many—kept firm and steadfast as a house whose foundations are built upon a rock.

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THE

SUMMER SUPPLEMENT

OF

THE ARGOSY.

THE SURGEON'S DAUGHTERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

LOVE.

DO you happen to be acquainted with the Faithful City of Worcester?—The loyal city which, in its trueheartedness, remained firm to its unhappy king, Charles the Martyr, with his son, when all other of his towns had turned against him, and so earned the right to be called Faithful for ever? If a stranger, you cannot do better than pay a day's visit to it: you may go to many a town less worth seeing. Whilst your dinner is preparing at the Star and Garter—at which dinner you must beg the host not to forget the Severn salmon, and the far-famed lampreys, fatal in his day to the First Henry—go on a tour of inspection through the city. Taking its cathedral first: and when you have looked at its renovated grandeur; at its cold, handsome monuments, erected to the memory of those who have long been colder than they are, and admired its beauteous east-window of many colours, step into the cloisters, where the irreverent Cromwell stabled his horses, and there pause awhile over the gravestone bearing the solitary inscription "Miserrimus," and speculate upon its unhappy tenant's life and fate. Then, passing through the "Green," and the gate of Edgar Tower, turn to Chamberlain's China Factory—it has passed into other hands now, but the name "Chamberlain" still clings to it, and will cling, whilst present generations shall exist. The Worcester china is spoken of all over the world, and it deserves its reputation: in point of art and refined beauty, it yields to none. You may have been all the way to Pekin, and bought up the curious teacups and saucers there, so much lauded to untravelled people; you may be at home in all the splendours of all the departments of the Sèvres Porcelaine; but you see now they cannot surpass, if they can vie with, that produced at Worcester. Turning about again, from the China-works, to stand in front of the Guildhall, you admire its façade, its statues, and its conspicuous motto, "Floreat Semper, Fidelis Civitas." Did

you ever hear the anecdote connected with its body-corporate of other days, when George the Third was king? His Majesty visited the Faithful City, staying in it a few days: and this most loyal corporation exercised their brains devising ways and means of showing their fealty: as, between ourselves, corporations do still: which, it is said, were well and duly appreciated. When the addressing, and the feasting, and all the rest of it was over, and the king was preparing to leave the town, one last and final attention was projected by the body-corporate. A deputation of them waited on their august guest, obtained an audience, and solicited "the honour of escorting his Majesty to the gallows." The King stared, laughed, and thought he would rather be excused. They had omitted to explain that they merely wished to pay his Majesty the respect of attending him out of the town as far as the spot where the gallows for the condemned criminals stood. It was at the top of Red Hill. The King gave permission to *that.*

The inhabitants of Worcester are said to deserve the initials P. P. P. affixed to their names, denoting Poor, Proud, and Pretty. Whether, take them as a whole, they are poor, I cannot say; proud they undoubtedly are, for that is the characteristic of all cathedral towns; and you certainly cannot walk through the city without being struck with the remarkably pretty faces of the girls you meet.

At a very long-past period, so long that we elderly people can but just remember it, there lived in Worcester a surgeon and general practitioner, Mr. George Juniper. He was a little man, with a fair complexion and curly light hair; skilful, kind-hearted, sensible, and much esteemed by his fellow citizens. He had been in practice many years and his connexion was extensive; but he was no longer young, and began to feel the need of a little rest and less responsibility. Mr. Juniper always kept a qualified assistant, who was generally a young man; though latterly he had not been fortunate in respect to his assistants. One of them sent a patient poison in mistake for Epsom salts, which nearly cost the lady her life; another grew fonder of the billiard-table than he was of the surgery; and a third made love too conspicuously to the surgeon's daughters. So that of assistants Mr. Juniper grew weary, and thought he must try some other mode of help.

George Juniper rejoiced in seven daughters. "Seven daughters," cries the aghast old bachelor, reading this through his spectacles; "was he mad?" Well, sometimes they did nearly enough to drive him so, had he been less good-humoured and indulgent. But he could not lay the claim of paternity to all the seven. It had happened in this way:

There resided in Worcester, again many years back even from this, an old gentleman of the name of Battlebridge. He had made a large fortune in business, and had retired to enjoy it, or a portion of it, in a great square handsome house with a large garden, keeping a cook, housemaid, and gardener, the two latter being man and wife.

Up to one-and-seventy years of age, Mr. Battlebridge had not married; consequently, his dear relatives, even to the twentieth cousin, although they were all well off, were excessively attentive and affectionate towards him, calling upon him and carrying him presents of jam and flannel nightcaps a great deal oftener than he wanted them. But one day it was disclosed to the old gentleman, that a graceless nephew of his had avowed, the previous night, in a mixed society, that not one of them "cared a rap for the old man; all they wanted was that he should betake himself off, so that they might inherit his gold."

Whilst Mr. Battlebridge was digesting this agreeable news, there burst into his parlour his cook and housekeeper, Molly; her cheeks crimson, and her voice angry. She had been having another breeze with the gardener and his wife, such breezes being pretty common, and had come to give warning. Now Molly was a superior young woman and good girl, who looked after her master's comforts, and old Battlebridge would as soon have lost his right hand.

"It's two to one," cried Molly, turning her comely face to her master. "What chance have I against them? They are always on at me: and Mark is the most overbearing man alive. If you don't like to pay me my wages, sir, and let me be off this day, I'll leave without them."

"I'll make it two to two for you, Molly, if you will, and then you can have fair play," responded the old gentleman.

"How will you do that, master?" asked Molly, her passion a little abating, and her pretty mouth breaking into a smile.

"Why I'll marry you myself," returned old Battlebridge.

"I am not in a humour to be joked with," retorted Molly, becoming wrathful again. "Do you please to pay me sir, or not?"

"I am not joking," he replied. "I'll get the license to-day, and marry you to-morrow."

And old Battlebridge did so: and from that time Molly sat in the parlour with him, and became as much of a lady as she could, and was Mrs. Battlebridge. Worcester made a great commotion at the news; the relatives made a greater. "Married indeed, when he ought to have died!" they cried; and they declared that had they known of it beforehand, they would have shut him up in the madhouse at Droitwich.

Three little girls were born to old Battlebridge, and then he died, leaving his whole property to his wife and children. The relations threw it into Chancery, like the simpletons they were, for they had not a leg to stand upon. One of them acknowledged that they had done it in a moment of exasperation: and exasperation, mind you, has been more productive to Chancery than any other passion. The money came out of it just halved in value, thanks to the case being minus the said leg: had it possessed but the shadow of one, it would never have come out at all. But there was a great deal left

yet; quite enough to tempt many a suitor to pay court to the comely Widow Battlebridge. The successful one was Surgeon Juniper; and the Faithful City wondered. It wondered that he, being a gentleman in mind and manners, should take to himself a vulgar wife: but the surgeon, without so much as a wry face, gulped down the pill for the sake of the gilt that covered it.

That the new Mrs. Juniper was in a degree vulgar, nobody could deny: she was growing plump; she had not abandoned her homely speech and grammar, and had not tried to: but she possessed many redeeming qualities. She was gentle-tempered, kind-hearted, benevolent to the poor, an excellent wife, mistress, and mother; and many a well-born lady in the city was glad to shake hands with her, and to pay her the respect she deserved. At the time of Mr. Juniper's marriage with her he was a widower, and the father of three little girls; her three little damsels made six; and one, who was born after the double second marriage of the parties, made the seventh. So that is how Mr. Juniper counted his daughters.

The little girls grew up in course of time to be young women, well-educated and lady-like, but full of fun amidst themselves. Two of them—the eldest in each family—soon married; Ann Juniper to a merchant in Liverpool; Mary Battlebridge to a gentleman-farmer in Worcestershire.

It was about this time that the following advertisement appeared in the *Worcester Journal* and also in the *Times:* such advertisements being less common in those days than they are in these.

"To the Medical Profession: A gentleman fully qualified as surgeon, &c., possessing money to purchase a share in a practice, may hear of something desirable by applying to G. J., Post Office, Worcester."

The advertisement was Mr. Juniper's. He received sundry answers to it, and concluded a negociation.

Mr. Juniper's house, large and commodious, stood in one of the principal streets. Entering from its pillared portico, rooms opened on each hand: the dining-room on the right, the parlour on the left; the drawing-room was above. All these rooms faced the street. Mr. Juniper's professional rooms and surgery were at the back, close to the side entrance.

The parlour was appropriated to the young ladies, to their occupations and amusements. You never saw so untidy a place in your life: one with the bump of order would, upon entering it, have run away in dismay. An old piano stood on one side, a key or two missing and a dozen of its wires—it had been the girls' practising piano when they were children; a set of bookshelves rose opposite, piled with books in the greatest confusion; writing-desks lay about, some on the floor, some tumbling off chairs; sheets of music, in all stages of tearing and copying; workboxes stood open, some without lids, others without bottoms, their contents, all entangled to-

gether in one appalling mess; pens, pencils, paints, French crayons, palettes, chalks, work, thimbles, keys, notes, and scrap-books were scattered everywhere; whilst the chairs and the carpet were worn, and the table-covers frayed.

In this room, one evening in spring, were all the girls, gathered round a blazing fire, sitting, kneeling, or standing. The two Miss Junipers were little, fair, slender young women, very near-sighted, with hair remarkably light; whilst the daughters of the late Mr. Battlebridge were tall, buxom girls, with dark eyes and arched eyebrows; and the youngest, Georgiana, half-sister to all the others, was the beauty of the family. She was now eighteen, and was thought a great deal of by her sisters in general, and by herself in particular, and she had always been indulged. They were bustling, accomplished, good-natured girls, much liked in society: but their mother possessed stricter notions of right and wrong than does many a one who has been better born, and she "kept them under," and saw more strictly after them than the girls liked. So they looked forward with ardent hope to the time when they should be married, and become their own mistresses. Are there many girls who do not?—especially when they find they have left their teens behind them more years than they would care to tell.

On this evening, in their own parlour, they were chattering by firelight; just the nonsense that girls do chatter. Their theme was their father's new partner, who was expected on the morrow.

"I'll tell you what, Julia," observed Miss Elizabeth Juniper, "I have got him in my mind's eye exactly, just his portrait."

"Let us have it, Bessy," was the response of Miss Battlebridge.

"You remember that precious assistant papa had two years ago, with a nose like a monkey's and a waist like an elephant's? I'd not mind betting a new fan he will be just such another man."

"Green spectacles and all?"

"Green spectacles and all: or, perhaps an eye-glass by way of a change. We will turn him over to Cicely; she used to admire the elephant; and he admired her I think."

"You may call him an elephant and a monkey now," cried Miss Cicely Juniper, nodding her head, "but you were all setting your caps at him then."

"Just hark at Cicely!"

"He will not concern me," interrupted Georgiana, tossing back her pretty auburn curls, in the self-sufficiency of her youth and beauty, "for I know he will be as old as papa. I shall begin to call him 'uncle' as soon as he comes."

"Who's this?" exclaimed Kate Battlebridge, turning sharply round as the door opened, and a lady, attired in grass-green silk and white lace cap with pink ribbons, entered.

"It's only mamma. What are you coming in here for, mamma?"

"Why, the truth is, girls, I dozed asleep in the twilight, and the

fire went almost out, so I am come in while they blow it up," replied Mrs. Juniper. She was stout now and pretty red, and she *would* dress in bright colours; but her face was comely yet, and her voice kindly as ever. "Move away a bit, Bessy, and let one see the fire."

Miss Elizabeth, pushing her sisters closer together, made room for Mrs. Juniper, without losing her own place in the circle.

"We have been wondering what the new doctor will be like, mamma."

"Just like your silliness, girls: wondering your time away to waste. If I were you, I'd rather spend it putting this room straight. He'll be here to-morrow night, and then you'll see. I have been thinking what I had better get for his supper."

"Tea, mamma," interrupted the young ladies.

"Tea indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Juniper, indignantly. "If any of you took a journey of six-and-twenty miles on a stage coach, you'd be glad of something substantial to eat at the end of it. What do you think of a fine savoury duck, nicely stuffed with sage and onions?"

The girls screamed, laughed, and did not approve of the dish at all. Bessy Juniper suggested an improvement.

"Have the tea nicely laid, mamma, with watercress and small rolls," she said, "and get in a little potted meat ——"

"Potted donkey!" interrupted her mother, sharply. "Do you think your papa is going to take a partner to starve him?"

"Potted meats are the fashion now," Bessy ventured to remark.

"For full people; not for empty ones," retorted the hospitably-inclined lady. But before the discussion could be continued, the door again opened, and a servant, looking in, said, "Miss Erskine's here, young ladies."

The five girls started up, and hugged their visitor nearly to death. She was a very lovely girl, even for Worcester, with her dark blue eyes, her exquisite complexion, and her raven hair: and though she was young, and slight, and gentle, she had a self-possessed manner and a haughty step.

"This is kind, Florence," they cried; "we have been so stupid all the evening! Take your things off. We were going to send for you to-morrow night, to see the lion arrive."

"The what?" asked the young lady.

"Papa's new partner. He is coming by the Cheltenham coach. Bessy vows he'll be an elephant. And we are afraid he's old."

"And in the name of fortune, what difference should it make to you girls if he is old?" demanded Mrs. Juniper, turning round upon them, after shaking hands with Florence.

"Oh—he may not like our noise; our music, and that, if he is old," answered Kate, glancing at the rest.

"The preliminaries are arranged, then?" remarked Miss Erskine.

"Yes they are, my dear," said Mrs. Juniper. "So far as that

the gentleman is coming for six months upon trial. A trial for both parties, you know, Miss Florence, which is only fair."

"Of course it is," said Florence. "What is his name?"

"His name is the only item in the correspondence that we don't like," said Mrs. Juniper. "It's French. But he tells us he is thorough, genuine English. He is a Mr. de Courcy."

"Formerly spelt Coursée, I believe," said Julia Battlebridge. "We are dying to see what he's like," she continued in a low voice to Florence. "And we have got such pretty new dresses; challis, trimmed with green satin: we mean to put them on to-morrow night."

"Put on what?" asked Mrs. Juniper, who caught the last words.

"Our best behaviour," cried Julia, promptly.

But Mrs. Juniper's ears had been quick. "Put on your new challis, will you! Look here, girls: you will not set up any of your nonsensical flirting with this gentleman. Neither your papa nor me would allow it: mind that."

"Oh dear, *no*," cried the girls promptly in answer. "Why we are expecting him to be as old as Adam! Mamma, don't you think your fire's burnt up?"

"Here's the Cheltenham coach; the one he will come by to-morrow evening," exclaimed Cicely, as a resounding horn was heard. "He is from London, Florence; but he took Cheltenham on his road down, to see some friends."

"How that guard's a blowing!" ejaculated Mrs. Juniper.

"And the coach has slackened its speed as if it were going to stop."

"It is stopping," said Mrs. Juniper.

"And at our house too! and a gentleman——Oh mamma!" broke off Cicely, in excitement, "he is come to-night!"

"Who is come?" asked Mrs. Juniper.

"Why *he*, Mr. de Courcy. It must be! Now he is paying the guard—and now they are getting down his luggage—and now he is knocking at the door. What *shall* we do in these old merino frocks? Is there time to dress?"

"Bother to dressing!" put in the startled Mrs. Juniper, "what's to be done about supper? Nothing on earth in the house but some cold hashed mutton and a round of beef in pickle. Ring the bell for the cook: or one of you girls run and tell her to come to me: she must send out for——Never trust me," broke off poor Mrs. Juniper, "if your papa's not bringing him in here!"

It was quite true. Mr. Juniper, seeing that the dining-room fire looked cold and black, ushered him into the girls' parlour, where he knew there was always a blazing one. He had been so long used to its litter that he thought nothing of it, and it never occurred to him to ask what a stranger might think. The girls, in spite of their dismay, took in the visitor's appearance at a glance.

A tall, prepossessing man, some years under thirty, gentlemanly in

manner, free and pleasant in speech, with a rather sallow complexion, dark eyes, handsome features, and a winning smile. They could not well have seen one less like an elephant, or a monkey in spectacles. He laughed at their apologies about "the wrong room," and the "girls' parlour," and was at home with them at once.

Louis de Courcy—"Lewis," it had been always called, he told them, according to English pronunciation—was born in England of French parents; his ancestors had been scared from their own land at the time of the great French revolution, and had never returned to it. Louis, the youngest of a large family, had grown up in the entire habits of an Englishman, and, but for his name, none could have suspected that any other country than this could put in a claim to him. He had been highly educated, was clever in his profession, and had fair prospects as regarded money. When he reached Cheltenham, he had found his friends there in deep distress on account of a death in their house, so he had come on to Worcester.

Before Mr. de Courcy had been a week in the surgeon's house, he was a favourite with all its inmates, from Mr. Juniper himself down to Dick, the surgery-boy. Extremely clever, extremely eloquent, or, if we may be permitted to use the expression of Mrs. Juniper, "favoured with the gift of the gab," he took the good-will of people by storm, and the girls were convinced that a more desirable man as a husband-in-prospective was not to be found. But they could not all marry him: that was clear: so he was, by tacit consent, turned over to gladden the hopes of Georgiana, the others making themselves as agreeable with him as so many elder sisters. To Georgiana was left all the rights of flirting, and she did not fail to exercise them on her own account; de Courcy himself proving nothing loth, for he was fully awake to the charms of a pretty girl.

"It would be delightful for Georgy to be settled near us: and de Courcy would have to live quite close, being papa's partner," the girls remarked one to another. "We might spend half our time there."

Indeed, to have a married sister thus established they had long regarded as the most fortunate thing that could happen to them—always excepting their own marriage—for at her house they could flirt away at leisure, secure from the discerning eyes of Mrs. Juniper. So the girls set themselves honestly to work to further the flirtation between de Courcy and Georgiana. In all their walks and rambles, Georgy was left to his care: in all the evening parties, and they went to many, he was sure to be her especial cavalier: it was to her his arm was given, when it was given at all: it was to her singing his voice would be heard as second. When he came into the girls' parlour for ten minutes' chat, the seat next Georgy was at once vacated to him: more than all, when he would be in the humour to breathe words of tender nonsense, in reality meaning nothing, but to a girl's heart implying much, it was into Georgy's ear they were whispered. De Courcy was by nature thoughtless, careless of consequences: he

never reflected that these attentions might appear to other people to bear a serious meaning, or that he might be initiating Georgiana, for the first time in her life, into the art of love—to love *him.*

We must now turn to the subject and to the abode of Captain Erskine; who exemplified in his own person the truth of two of the attributes accorded to Worcester generally—poor and proud. Poor he was; very; and from no man, living within the city's walls, did exclusive notions of hauteur more fully shine forth, than from Florence's father, Captain Erskine. In regard to family, he stood on the very loftiest pinnacle; his ancestors had been the highest of the high. They were descended originally from royalty, and in later periods had owned lords and chancellors for cousins. He had got his pedigree, setting forth all this, framed and glazed, and hanging up in his sitting-room. That he was of good descent, appeared to be the fact; but he boasted of it in so ridiculous a manner as to have acquired the name in the town, derisively applied, of Gentleman Erskine. He held up his head, and literally looked down upon everybody. He was gracious with the Dean when he met him, and condescended to exchange bows with the prebends, but he looked straight over the hats of the minor canons; of other people he took no notice. But fortune, alas, had not been so prodigal to Gentleman Erskine as his rank and his merits deserved; therefore, he lived a most retired life. Want of means did not allow him to frequent the society of the great; the little were beneath him. It was with much pinching and screwing that he contrived to make both ends meet, when the expenses of his pretty little cottage, just outside the town, containing his daughter and their one maid-servant, were settled at the end of each year. He had sold out of the army before his wife died, and what his small income really was, no one knew.

Florence, brought up in these exclusive notions, had been allowed to cultivate the acquaintance of none. Whether the Captain expected a lord would drop from the sky some day and pick her up, he did not say, but he certainly allowed her no opportunity to mix with any of inferior rank, except the Junipers. Years back, when Mr. Juniper was attending the Captain professionally, he, the good-natured surgeon, pitying the isolated condition of the little girl, and the lack of means to afford her suitable instruction, proposed that she should come to his house daily, and partake (gratuitously) of the music and drawing lessons of Georgiana. Gentleman Erskine was too much impressed with the advantages of the proposal to decline it: though he considered the Juniper family amply repaid by the condescension. Hence had arisen Florence's intimacy at the surgeon's, and it was now so much a thing of habit, that it never occurred to her father to put a stop to it. Still he did not cease to remind Florence from time to time that though very worthy people in their way, those Junipers, they were persons whom she must not, even in thought, exalt into a level with their own sphere of life.

Florence dutifully listened: but she wished with her whole heart that all such exclusiveness was buried at the bottom of the sea.

Shortly after the arrival of Mr. de Courcy, it happened that a distant relative of Captain Erskine's, a Mr. Stanton, was passing through Worcester, and halted there for a day. He was an old man, somewhat feeble, and in descending the stairs at the Hop-pole, then the principal inn of the city, he fell and broke his leg. He received also an internal injury; and, altogether, it was a doubt whether he would ever leave the town again. When able to be removed from the Hop-pole, apartments were taken for him in Foregate Street, and there he lay still, Captain Erskine dining and spending the evening of every day with him. It was said in the town that the Captain had expectations from him, and that of course it caused him to be attentive. Through these repeated absences from home of her father, Florence was enabled, unquestioned, to spend every evening, if she so willed it, at Mrs. Juniper's.

Oh, silly girls! you four elder Miss Junipers! You have but little forethought. You have set your minds upon Georgiana's gaining de Courcy, yet you daily throw into his society one more beautiful and not less attractive than she is! Florence was for ever being sent for by them: and she went. The evenings were growing long then, and sometimes all the girls in a body would take her home, and sometimes de Courcy himself was her only companion. Florence had never been brought into contact with a man so fascinating. It is true his manners to her were not of that free, gallant, openly-attentive nature displayed to Georgiana, but there was a subdued tenderness in them when alone with her, infinitely more dangerous. Ah, readers! it is the old tale: Gentleman Erskine might impress upon his daughter the superiority of her descent to those around her, might descant upon it from night to morn; but he could not arrest this new, all-absorbing passion that was taking root in her heart. There is one thing makes its way in spite of all things—love.

It is dangerous to a girl's peace, let me tell you, ay and to a woman's also, to be alone with an attractive companion of the other sex in the quiet evening hours. Florence would leave the surgeon's pretty early, by half-past eight or so, de Courcy with her to see her safely home. The house was not far off. When there, she would lay her bonnet and scarf on the table of the little drawing-room, and leaning out at the open window, play with the jessamine and honeysuckle that grew round its frame; not that she cared for jessamine or honeysuckle just then. De Courcy, sitting by her, would converse upon no end of subjects—I hardly know what, but if you have ever made one in these stolen interviews, you can tell. He was trying to improve her French accent; teaching her to speak whole sentences in the language; making her conjugate its verbs, *aimer* amongst the rest. Florence would begin her lesson: she was not very perfect in the verbs, especially the reflective verbs; they puzzled her: "Je

m'aime, tu t'aimes, il s'aime; nous nous ——," and there she would stop. "Nous nous aimons," de Courcy would break in, with his low, silvery voice. It really was a musical voice, but had it been of a crow's harshness, it would still have been silvery to her ear.

"Nous nous aimons," de Courcy would go on, Florence repeating it after him, her heart beating, and her cheek blushing. He could see the blushes in the soft twilight of the evening, and she would turn her face from him, in its sweet consciousness, leaving nothing visible to his sight, save its exquisite profile. They would rarely get to the end of the verb. De Courcy would begin upon some subject more attractive: the bright stars, perhaps, that were beginning to shine, or the pleasant look of the landscape as it cast forth its light and shade in the moonlight. The cottage stood upon a gentle eminence, and commanded an extensive view of the lovely county, than which none more beautiful can be seen in England. The long chain of the Malvern Hills bounded the landscape in the distance, and de Courcy was wont to declare that the clustering white houses beneath the hills of Great Malvern looked like fairy sea-shells embedded amidst moss. The remark has been previously recorded elsewhere: but in truth it was often made. Thus they would wander on insensibly to dearer subjects, he reciting sweet verses at intervals, until they were both rapt in a maze of poetry and impassioned feeling. Byron's poems, Moore's strains, both more new to the world than they are now; any romance, in short, that he could call to memory. And, during all this time, through the French, and the verbs, and the talking, and the poetry, he was sure to have stolen one of her hands, and to hold it clasped in his. Who would give five shillings now for the chance of Georgy Juniper?

One evening, either the young surgeon had remained too long, or Captain Erskine came home before his usual hour, but as they stood there, Florence was startled at the sight of her father coming up the road. She closed the window, rang the bell in hasty trepidation for candles, and just as the maid—who had had sweethearts herself, and was awake to things—scuffled them on to the table, and de Courcy rose and stood with his hat in his hand, Captain Erskine entered. A ceremonious bow between the two gentlemen, courteous on de Courcy's part, stiff and forced on the Captain's, and the former said good-night, and was gone.

"Why, bless my soul, Florence!" uttered the astounded aristocrat, looking round to be sure that he was not dreaming, "it was that French fellow of Juniper's!"

She made some answer, quite unconscious what it was. Fortunately the Captain was too much ruffled to listen.

"Pray what brought *him* here?"

"I—he——" Florence began in her terror and agitation, and then she could get no further: as we all know, conscience does make the very best of us cowards. So she coughed a sharp succession of

coughs, as if something had got into her throat, and turned to the window and began pulling about the muslin curtains: anything to gain time and calmness.

"What's the matter with the curtains?" he continued, sharply. "I ask you what on earth brought that partner of Juniper's here? He was actually sitting down when I first saw him. Sitting down! my eyes could not have deceived me."

"He brought this French book of Elizabeth Juniper's," she stammered, indicating a small French story-book; and, so far, that was true. Bessy had lent it to her and he carried it home in his hand. "And I was at fault in my verbs, papa, and he offered to set me right!"

True again. At least, tolerably so. Ah, good sir, good Paterfamilias, groaning over these pages and Florence's degeneracy, do you imagine your own girls tell you the whole truth always? You were young and in love once: how much did you tell in that golden time?

"The devil take the French and their verbs and all connected with them," shrieked Captain Erskine. "How dare you stoop to put yourself upon a level with a common fellow of a doctor?"

"Dear papa," said Florence, bursting into agitated tears. "I thought it no harm to ask him about the French verbs."

"There's every harm," retorted Gentleman Erskine. "Do you forget, Florence, who and what we are descended from? There's not a family in the county can boast the antiquity of ours; and here I come home and find a professional man's assistant sitting in the same room with you—*sitting!*—quite familiar—admitted to an equality! Some unheard-of French jackanapes, who may never have had a grandfather!"

"I am very sorry," murmured Florence.

"Sorry! that's not the word for it: you ought to be ashamed. If the individual should come up again, let the servant take his message from him at the door, and dismiss him civilly—very strange that the Miss Junipers cannot send a maid with their commissions!"

Florence sighed, and was wisely silent.

"You are getting too old now, Florence, to continue your intimacy with these Junipers," proceeded Gentleman Erskine, loftily. "They were certainly kind to you, and all that, and when you were younger it did not so much signify; but it won't do now. Don't go there again. Or, at any rate, but very rarely; and let the acquaintanceship gradually drop."

Captain Erskine stopped at that. He supposed he had said all that was necessary, for it never occurred to his exclusive mind to suspect that his daughter could be more tolerant on the subject of "family" than himself. What if he had been in a corner of the room that very evening, and seen all the tacit love-making? He might have vanished through the floor with the shock, after the manner of the imps in the pantomimes.

Thus Georgiana Juniper regarded Louis de Courcy as her own

particular knight, but so did Florence Erskine. Each believed that she possessed his heart, his sole allegiance. Each of them loved him in return. Georgiana in but a light degree; Florence passionately and enduringly. Her intellect was of a higher order than Georgiana's; she had more imagination, more dreamy sentiment: and it is precisely in such natures that love takes the deepest hold.

And what thought Mr. de Courcy? It was impossible that he could remain wholly blind to the present aspect of affairs, and he began to doubt whether he had not got himself into what the Americans call a "fix." That it was his own fault, entirely the result of his thoughtlessness, was no consolation at all; quite the contrary. He could not fail to see that Georgiana liked him, if she did not love, and he awoke to the fact that he was expected by the other girls to make love to her. He had no true love to give her: all his hopes were concentrated on Florence. The course of true love never yet ran smooth; we learnt that in our copy-books: in this case there seemed to be a likelihood of its running rather rough. Why could not Mr. de Courcy have fallen outright in love with Georgy Juniper, and married her with her parents' consent, as he might have done, and so have found his future path all straight before him? Why should he have remained wholly insensible (always excepting the flirting) to her attractions, and plunged over head and ears in love with one, whom there was little more chance of his winning and wearing, than there was of his winning the stately daughter of the good old bishop at the palace? It must have been fate, I think; or, something in the air.

It has been asserted that love cannot exist without jealousy. Love is wonderfully sharp-sighted; and, almost before there was real cause, Florence and Georgiana became jealous of one another. The elder girls were not so soon awake to danger: but a word or two, dropped by Georgy one day, in a pet, opened their eyes.

They took alarm at once, lest the desirable match they had so pleasantly carved out should drop through; and Florence was invited there no more. Not an hour did de Courcy henceforth find for himself: walks this evening, projected walks to-morrow evening, tea and parties always: and he could not escape this, unless he had been guilty of absolute discourtesy. Besides, he who had been so thoughtlessly officious in seeking the society of Georgiana, could not abruptly forswear it in rudeness now.

Elizabeth Juniper resolved to put the matter at rest: so the next time she was alone with Mr. de Courcy she mentioned, apparently quite incidentally, that Florence Erskine was engaged to be married.

"To be married!" uttered de Courcy, the red colour flushing into his sallow cheek.

"Did you not know it?" asked Elizabeth. "She is to marry her cousin, Bob Erskine."

De Courcy reflected. He was nearly sure he had heard Florence speak of a cousin "Bob."

"You don't know Gentleman Erskine," she went on. "His uncles and aunts, his godfathers and godmothers were princes and princesses, or something as grand, and he considers nobody upon earth good enough to associate with himself and Florence. Only to see him loom through the street in winter, in that old worn fur-cloak of his with the scarlet lining, you would think all Worcester belonged to him! The little boys have to turn out into the gutter, for there's not room enough to pass him. Fancy such a man permitting his daughter the hazard of being addressed by any chance provincial! Not he, you may be sure. So he has secured for her one of the family, Bob Erskine."

"Is this true, Bessy?" asked the young man.

"True as Gospel."

"It is strange I never heard Florence allude to it."

"It would be stranger if you had. Young ladies are not in the habit of telling of their matrimonial engagements. I may be engaged, for all you have heard me say: so may Kate; or Georgy either."

"Very true," murmured de Courcy, with more abstraction than Bessy liked to see him exhibit at her latest allusion. "Who is Bob Erskine? Where does he live?"

"Bob's a cousin, I tell you; the head of the Erskine family. He is in the Guards, or the Rifles, or some one of those crack regiments."

"Can it be really so, Bessy?" he continued, still harping upon the theme. "How did you come to know it?"

"From Florence herself. The last time Bob was staying with them, we girls charged her with its being so, and she admitted it. Though perhaps I ought not to have told you—it slipped from me unawares. It must be quite entre nous, mind you, Mr. de Courcy."

"Certainly," nodded the gentleman, unconsciously biting the top of his silver pencil-case into all sorts of forms.

"They are not to be married yet," concluded Bessy. "Captain Erskine considers Florence too young; and Bob—well, Bob's young too."

De Courcy took it all in—like an amiable sea-gull. Open and truth-telling himself, it never occurred to him to suspect people of being otherwise, certainly not a young lady like Elizabeth Juniper. But though Bessy had exaggerated a little, she had grounds for what she said. They had teased Florence about Bob Erskine when he was there, had accused her of being engaged to him; and Florence, after the custom of vain girls, had laughed and simpered, but had not positively denied it.

De Courcy felt miserable, for he had become deeply attached to Florence Erskine, and there grew up a sore feeling in his heart towards her, that she should have fooled him nearly on to tell her so.

Mr. and Mrs. Juniper were totally ignorant of all this flirting and scheming. Had a suspicion of it entered their minds, they would have given the girls a sharp trimming all round.

After this, the young doctor did not go near Florence, and if he heard of her being at Mrs. Juniper's, he kept out of the way. Thus he fell easily into the schemes of the Juniper girls, and flirted with Georgy as much as ever. "Pour faire passer le temps," he said to himself, "rien autre." He often *thought* in French.

One evening, Florence Erskine stood at that open window of her sitting-room; she had thus stood for many, many evenings, watching for one who did not come. Talk about de Courcy's feelings being sore—what were they to her's? Anger, despair, jealousy, and love by turns held possession of her. Oh that she should have suffered herself thus to become attached to a stranger,—to a man despised of her father,—to one who had sought her love only to fling it away in neglect!

Would he ever come again? would those sweet hours, whose very remembrance seemed to renew life and love, ever return? Where was he? What had she done that he should thus desert her? As these thoughts dwelt in her mind, flushing her cheek, chilling her hands, agitating her whole frame, a noise, as of carriage-wheels, was heard, and Florence looked up. The road passed close by the side of the cottage, and the large, handsome four-wheeled chaise of Mr. Juniper came in sight, the surgeon driving, his wife beside him, and Julia and Kate in the back seat. Following, was the surgeon's professional gig, containing de Courcy and Georgiana.

The party bowed and smiled and nodded at Florence, the good-humoured surgeon calling out something her ear did not catch. *He* raised his hat as he looked at her: and, in the space of a minute, all trace of them, save the dust, was gone.

She shut down the window; she leaned her throbbing temples upon her hands; she gave vent to all the fierce jealousy that was raging within her. Never, never, she told herself in her passion, should her thoughts revert to that man again, save with scorn. And yet, the next minute, she caught herself indulging in a fantastic hope that he might come, even that evening, when his drive was over.

But he did not come; and the next night passed, and the next, yet he did not come; and a whole week dragged itself by, and still he did not come. Florence was as one in a fever, tossing about by night and by day, and finding no rest.

One evening she was passing the surgeon's house when Mr. Juniper met her and took her in. They were just going to tea, and the hearty, kindly girls said she must stop. The whole family were present, and de Courcy looked at her keenly. She refused their invitation, but it was of little use: one ran away with her bonnet, another with her gloves: and she sat down.

"What news is stirring, Florence?" asked the surgeon.

"None, that I have heard," she replied. "Papa received a letter from my cousin Robert this morning. You remember him?"

"Quite well."

"He has been exchanging into another regiment, and embarks immediately for India. When he comes home again, he will probably be an old man, he says."

"Has he got a wife yet, dear?" asked Mrs. Juniper, slyly: for she had had her ideas of Florence and her cousin.

"Bob got a wife!" laughed Florence. "Oh, no. He is not likely to take a wife."

"My dear, you speak rather confidently."

"I think I may," replied Florence. "When Bob had to go to Spain last month, papa, in writing, warned him against the attractions of the ladies there, saying he should not like to see him bring home a Spanish wife. Bob answered him that he was the last man in the world to think of any encumbrance of the sort, Spanish or English."

De Courcy looked up, a strange, eager expression on his features. But, just at that moment, Miss Bessy was so awkward as to tilt over the cup of tea she was handing him, and he had to start up and dance, for it scalded his legs.

A servant was desired to attend Florence home that night, but there stood de Courcy in the hall, hat in hand. "Papa wants *you*, Mr. de Courcy," exclaimed Bessy: "he called to you as he went into the surgery." So the young man, with an impatient exclamation on his lips, sought his senior partner; and Florence left with the maid.

But scarcely had she entered her home, when he followed her in: and he stood there before her, his chest heaving, and his words coming from him impetuously.

"What must you have thought of me, Florence, all this while?" he began. "You must either have judged me to be mad, or the most dishonourable man breathing."

She trembled in her surprise and agitation, and felt faint, and could not answer. She certainly had not deemed him mad.

He took her trembling hands in his, he looked earnestly into her changing face, and went on, eagerly:

"Misapprehension has come between us, my love; whether designedly, or not, I cannot say. I see it all now. I was led to believe you were engaged to be married to your cousin—this Bob you have been talking of to-night."

She uttered an exclamation of astonishment. "Oh no, no. There never was anything between us: we did not care for each other in that way. Bob is too poor to marry: that is, too extravagant."

"Yet I, in my credulity, believed it. It has been as a dagger in my heart night and day. For I love you, Florence, with a deep and holy love."

He drew her closer to him,—he whispered words of the most endearing tenderness,—he pressed her sweet face against his. And then they both thought—and said—that nothing should ever part

their hearts again ; that they would live together, and for each other, until their years of life had run into the sear and yellow leaf.

But how many others have fondly vowed the same, only to find them hereafter words of vanity and vexation of spirit !

II.

THE PREDICTION.

PRESENTLY we are going to pay a day's visit to Malvern. Not to Malvern as it has been of later years and now is, but as it was nearly a life-time ago. It was a lovely little spot then ; romantic, secluded, and beautiful. Not a shop to be seen in it save the cake-shop by the steep, leading down towards the abbey, and the library. No gay place was it in those bygone days, no rendezvous for travellers in smart clothes, eager for pleasure and society ; the few visitors seeking it were really invalids, requiring pure air and peace. It was half soothing, half painful, to sit on these beautiful hills, somewhere about St. Ann's Well, and watch the scanty stock of visitors toiling up, one by one. Soothing to recline there, undisturbed, on the green moss, soft as velvet, looking round at that immense extent of landscape, so calm and still, where the only noise to break the quiet would be a distant sheep-bell ; painful to gaze at the pale faces of the invalids, supporting themselves up the hill by the help of a stick, and to listen to their troubled breathing as they gained the Well-room, and held the goblet-glass under the spring. I have sat there many a day as a child, finding no occupation but this watching and sympathy : picturing to my curious mind the outward and inward histories of these sick strangers : wondering whence they came, whither they were going next, where they lodged in the village. On some bright day the monotonous scene would be varied. A picnic party from Worcester, all gaiety and laughter and baskets of provisions, would crowd merrily up the hill, and fixing upon a level, convenient spot, encamp themselves and their dishes on it, preferring this free, gipsy mode of enjoying a repast to the confinement and expense of an hotel. Sometimes the day would pass on in almost complete solitude, no parties and no invalids, and then there was nothing to do but sit on the grass and build castles in the air, or to find a fairy-tale book, and be rapt in a child's Elysium.

Oh the retrospect of those early days, our life's morning ! when it seems that there is no care or sorrow in the world, or that, if there is, it cannot come near us ; when we dream not that existence, the mysterious future so eagerly longed for, can be otherwise than it looks to us in those day-visions, sunny as the charming landscape around, bright as the blue sky above ! To recal life as it looked then, with its glorious hopes and expectations, and to dwell on the troubled waters that have come rushing on since, well-nigh overwhelming heart and existence !——Let us hasten on.

Many a merry donkey-party you might see then, toiling up the hills or cantering about the village. We had ours. One of them I especially remember. Twelve or fourteen of us, careless boys and girls together, got the donkeys hired for us, and mounting in the village, just by the Unicorn, cantered off for a ride towards the Link; the old, sober heads of the company bringing up the rear on foot at a sober pace. The turnpike-gate was open, and through it we dashed. But out came the turnpike-man, tearing after us, shouting and screaming. We all reined in, and stopped. What was the matter? Matter indeed! we had gone through the gate without paying. It was certainly true: and what was quite as true, upon searching our pockets, those who had any, there was not a single halfpenny to be found in one of them; what little we had possessed earlier in the day had been spent in "Malvern cakes." In vain we represented to the man that "those behind" were coming up with pockets full of money, and *they* were the paymasters. He preferred being on the safe side, was surly and inexorable; so he made us all dismount, and took off the white cloths of the donkeys. What cared we? we remounted without them, and scampered on down the Link, leaving our astonished old relatives to redeem the pledges. *Old*, we thought them then: we should not think so now. Lodgings at Malvern were within the bounds of a cautious purse then, and there was many an unpretending cottage, picturesque without, clean within, which would let you its best sitting-room, and its bedrooms, for less than a sovereign per week, and give you pleasant looks and civil attendance besides. Go and try them now, these Malvern lodgings. Not that any cottages are left to try: they are transformed into glaring villas and pretentious mansions.

Few places have changed as Malvern has changed. Many a year ago it became the emporium of fashionable society, who flocked to it to try the "Water Cure." Patients wrote their experiences to laud the system; our greatest novelist of that day put forth an account of the marvellous blessings it had wrought on *him*, telling the world it had made him young again. But the romance of the place is gone for ever, and the peace of seclusion it cannot know again.

The day's visit to Malvern was led to by Mrs. Juniper. Summer had come in. Mr. de Courcy and Florence Erskine were cherishing their secret love; while the Juniper girls, perceiving it, made up their minds to accept the inevitable, if it must be, and ceased to fight actively against it. They were good, right-minded girls, after all.

"I don't know whether I should altogether care to have him for my husband, though he is very nice to flirt with," avowed Georgiana.

One hot afternoon the girls wrote a note, inviting Florence to tea; there was a secret they very much wished to impart to her. On the evening previous to this, de Courcy had paid a short visit to Captain Erskine's house. And now as Florence read the note, his impassioned words were still vibrating in her ears.

Of course she went: she would have gone to the end of the earth

for the prospect of meeting *him.* And it was when all were seated at the tea-table that Mrs. Juniper began talking of Malvern.

"Children," she said, "guess what I have been thinking of."

"How should we know, mamma?" asked the young ladies.

"Why that we are perlite people, all of us, to have had Mr. de Courcy so long in our house, and never to have taken him to Malvern."

"We can take him now," said Bessy.

"To be sure," heartily assented her mother. "And you have a great treat in store, as you've never seen it," she added to de Courcy. "How we came to neglect it, I can't make out. Why, the first attention we think of paying to a stranger-friend—anyone from London, perhaps, or from far away on t'other side somewhere—is to take him to Malvern." Mrs. Juniper's geographical knowledge was rather confused, especially on the map of England and Wales.

"Let us make up a picnic," exclaimed Georgiana. "And take our provisions, and dine on the hill."

"With all my heart," said Mrs. Juniper. "You must come with us, Miss Florence."

She looked up eagerly, and caught de Courcy's glance. Oh the rapture of a whole day spent on the Malvern Hills with him!

"When shall it be?" cried Julia Battlebridge. "When would it suit papa? To-morrow, papa?"

"If you like, child. Ask your mamma."

"To-morrow!" echoed Mrs. Juniper, reprovingly; "hadn't you better start to-night? You children have about as much brains as thought—and your papa no more either, in some things. Who is to get up a picnic at an hour's notice? There's the company to be invited, and got together, and there's the eatables. We shall want cold fowls, and tongue, and alimode beef; and some of you perhaps will be calling out for fruit tartlets. How can you have all this if you don't give time to cook and prepare it?"

Mrs. Juniper's remonstrance was unanswerable; so one of the girls dismally proposed the day after.

"That's as bad," corrected Mrs. Juniper. "Nobody goes picnicing on a Saturday."

Finally, Monday was fixed upon. But Florence was wondering whether she could gain her father's consent.

Just at this period, Worcester was indulging surprise at a matter which was not in the common run of events. Some two or three weeks before, a stranger had alighted in the town, had taken a lodging, and had caused it to be circulated in privacy and secrecy that he told fortunes. The surprise arose not from the simple action of his setting-up as a fortune-teller, for that was nothing extraordinary, but in the fact that sundry predictions, spoken by this man to different people, were fulfilled in, to say the least of it, an unaccountable manner. Several of his visitors declared, with their eyes dilating

and their hair standing on end near the bump of marvel, that he had told them things which nobody ever knew, or ever could know, save themselves and Heaven. A scanty few of credulous people went to him at first: what they said sent others, and the man's fame grew. He was called the Wizard, and he was never known in Worcester by any other name. It is no fictitious story that I am relating, though but few people can be left now in Worcester who remember it. The better class of people went to him in secret and would not have confessed to it for the world; some of them went in disguise. The man and his curious power had become an engrossing theme in the town; Mr. Juniper laughingly talked of it, and Mr. Juniper's daughters were wild to test it.

It was this which the girls wanted to confide to Florence: that they had made up their minds, after some qualms of conscience, to consult the Wizard.

Tea over, two of them drew her into their own parlour; Cicely and Kate: and they asked her if she would not like to accompany them.

"Are you all going?" enquired Florence.

"Not at once: the number might betray us, for where's there such a family of grown-up girls as ours?" replied Cicely. "I and Georgy think of going first, and the other three some later night. Won't you come with us?"

"Not I," laughed Florence, "I have no faith. Wizards are clever men, I suppose; this one especially must be; but ——"

"It will be such fun," urged Cicely. "We are dying to go. They say the most extraordinary things of him."

"What if you get found out? If your papa hears of it?"

"How can he hear?" broke in Kate. "We shall take every precaution: wear our shabbiest cotton frocks and garden shawls. The maids are going to lend us muslin caps to put on under our old cottage bonnets, so that we may pass for servant-girls. Why, if papa —or mamma, and she's sharper—were to meet us in the street they could not recognise us."

"I know it will be great fun; and if I thought it would not be found out ——" mused Florence. "When do you go, Cicely?"

"We have fixed on Saturday night; the common people are then occupied, and there will be less chance of our meeting anyone at the Wizard's. Mamma won't miss us; we shall soon be there and back; and the others have promised to stay with her all the time. If she asks anything, they are going to say we are up-stairs, brushing each other's hair. Do come, Florence."

"I don't believe in it," returned the young lady, waveringly.

"Why, they say he will describe one's future husband," exclaimed Cicely, "and so accurately, that if you were not to meet with him for years to come, you could not fail instantly to recognise him."

A quick, burning colour dyed the face of Florence Erskine. If the wise man could indeed do this, she should know whether she was

destined for de Courcy, and her doubts and her fears would be set at rest. And yet, the next moment, she laughed at the absurdity of her thoughts. "Perhaps I will go," she said to Cicely.

"Come in to tea on Saturday evening and we will steal away afterwards. You will not have a better opportunity. And remember, Florence, it is no such weighty matter after all, and if it does no good—if we don't hear anything worthy of belief, I mean—it can do no harm."

"I will go with you; but mind, I have no superstition about me," exclaimed Florence, looking suddenly up. "I never had faith in these things, and never shall have. If I had faith, or any superstition, I should stay away."

Cicely laughed. "That is what everybody says."

"For when I was a child," proceeded Florence, speaking as if she were in a reverie, "a woman who pretended to the gift of reading the future, as this man now pretends, foretold that if ever I should have my 'fate cast,' I should be at the end of my life."

Kate gave a subdued scream. "Then for the love of heaven stay away from him!" she exclaimed.

"Don't be silly, Kate," said Florence, lightly. "Do you believe that such power, pertaining only to the Most High, can be given to mortal man?"

Kate considered. Cicely shook her head. "It may be given for a purpose at times," Cicely said gravely. "We cannot know. Either all these 'Wise Men' are imposters, or none are; understand, I am speaking only of these wonderful soothsayers who are heard of perhaps but once in a century. If this strange man, astrologer, or whatever he may call himself, who has set himself down in Worcester, no one knowing 'whence he cometh, or whither he goeth,' like the wind—if it is given to him to discern and foretell the future, it may have been also given to her, who prophesied, you say, of your fate when you were a child. Do not go, Florence."

"And we are living in enlightened times, and you think it necessary to give me this advice gravely?" exclaimed Florence, her lip curling with scorn. "Oh, Cicely!"

"But if you are so mockingly incredulous, why go at all?" persisted Cicely. "You will not believe anything he may tell you."

"Surely you do not suppose I go to have *my* fortune told?" retorted Miss Erskine. "Nonsense, Cicely! If I go at all, it will be for the fun of the thing; and to hear how far your credulity will allow him to dupe you and Georgiana."

Cicely looked at her. "I don't think you are quite so sceptical as you wish to make out, Florence."

"Indeed I am."

On the following day, Friday, Florence proffered the request to her father—that she might be allowed to accompany the party to Malvern. It is eight miles from Worcester by road. Captain Erskine

chanced to be in a good humour, with himself and everybody about him, for Mr. Stanton had distinctly intimated to him that he was substantially remembered in his will, and the Captain foresaw an end to his pinching poverty. So he hesitated in his reply: had it not been for his exuberance of spirits he would have denied her at once.

"Who is going?" he enquired.

"Mrs. Juniper and the young ladies," replied Florence, not daring to intimate that any strangers were to be invited. "Mr. Juniper will ride over in the afternoon, if he has time."

"Juniper's carriage will not hold them all," cried Gentleman Erskine. "And who's to drive it?"

"The groom will drive, I suppose; and they are going to have a post-carriage from the Crown," answered Florence. "It is two years since I went to Malvern, papa."

"But the going with these Junipers, Florence! I don't like that."

"I do not know anyone else to go with," she timidly observed.

"Well, Florence," he reluctantly conceded, "for this once you may join them. But I do insist upon it that afterwards you set yourself resolutely to break up by degrees the intimacy. The girls may be pleasant and sociable, and all that, but they are beneath you. I am going out myself for a few hours on Monday," he concluded, pompously.

Gentleman Erskine was going fishing. It was an amusement he delighted in. Sometimes he would be seen with his rod and basket, bearing off towards the Wear, at Powick; sometimes in the direction of Bransford; sometimes in a totally opposite route. And there, arrived at the stream, he would sit with exemplary patience for hours, in breathless silence, staring at the float, his line in the water, a worm at one end and a—what is it?—at the other, waiting for the fish to bite; his brain filled all the time with the greatness of the grandeur of all the Erskines.

It was getting towards sunset on Saturday evening, when three figures, attired in cotton dresses, faded shawls, and plain straw bonnets with huge muslin borders underneath them, in short, looking like decent servant-girls, stole out of Surgeon Juniper's house, and walked quickly along the street, turning their heads from the gaze of the passers-by. The young ladies would fain have waited for twilight, but had not dared to make it so late. Fortune seemed to have favoured them, for an old friend of Mrs. Juniper's had dropped in to spend the evening with her, and she never gave a thought to what the girls might be about; whilst Mr. Juniper and de Courcy were gone to some famous medical lecture that was being given that evening in the town.

They bent their steps in the direction of Lowesmoor, in an obscure part of which neighbourhood sojourned the Wizard.

"There's the house," exclaimed Cicely in a whisper, pointing to

one of four low ones in a row, with green shutters and narrow doorways. "I and Julia were walking by it with papa last Sunday, and he laughingly showed it to us: little thinking we should ever make use of his information."

As Cicely spoke, they halted before the door, hesitating and deliberating, half fearful, now it was so near, of going on with the adventure.

"You knock, Georgy," continued Cicely.

"Knock yourself," retorted Georgy. "You have the use of your hands."

"Shall we go back?" asked Florence, some impulse prompting her.

"Why, if we go back," argued Cicely, "they will laugh at us so dreadfully. Unless we say he had such a lot of people with him he could not see us. Are you afraid?"

"I afraid," retorted Florence, disdainfully. "But we had better do one thing or the other, for we may attract attention standing here."

"Oh courage, courage," exclaimed Georgiana, giving a smart rap at the door: "don't let us have to say we took all this trouble about the caps and things for nothing." And, before they had time to draw back, which perhaps they would have done, after all, a boy opened the door and showed them into the presence of the Wizard.

He looked as little like a wizard, that is, like their ideas of one, as he could well look. A thin old gentleman of sixty, dressed in black with a white cravat, leaning back comfortably in an arm-chair: they might have taken him for one of the minor canons sitting at his ease after dinner. The room had nothing in it but chairs, tables, a carpet, the usual ordinary furniture: of all apparatus generally supposed to belong to the exercise of the black art, the place was void.

"Is it the wrong house?" whispered Georgiana to her sister.

"No, it is the right house," said the master, answering her thoughts, for her speech, they truly believed, he could not have heard. "Which of you shall I speak with first? Let the others take a seat."

He motioned towards a row of chairs that stood against the wall at the end of the room. The girls did not take the hint; all three of them clustered round the table, on which stood a curiously-constructed lamp, not known in those days, but common enough now. It gave a great light, and Georgiana, shrinking from its glare, pushed, almost imperceptibly, her sister towards the soothsayer. He resumed his seat, and looked at them, one by one.

"Why did you come to me in disguise?" he asked: "with me it avails not. Take off those clumsy gloves," he continued to Cicely; "you have adopted them that your lady-hands may be hidden from me: but until I have examined those hands, I cannot answer you a single question, or tell aught that you seek to know."

She removed obediently the old beaver gloves, almost reverently, as if she were in the presence of a master-spirit—perhaps she thought she *was*. Before looking at her hands, he took out of a drawer a pack of cards, giving them to her to shuffle and cut, and he then placed them, one by one, their faces upwards, upon the table. They were singular looking; not playing cards at all; each card presented a different and intricate picture, and was inscribed with some curious Egyptian names.

Cicely waited, her hands stretched out to display their palms. Now the wizard would carefully examine the hands, a microscope to his eye; now, without the microscope, he would study the cards on the table. Presently he laid the glass down, and looked in Cicely's face. The other two stood in silence, amusement displayed on the countenance of Florence Erskine.

"You need not have troubled yourself to come here," he began abruptly, addressing Cicely, "for I can tell you little more than you already know."

"What do you mean?" she stammered, involuntarily: and he resumed.

"Your course will be marked with no event of sufficient moment to be set forth here: neither of joy nor sorrow. As a ship sails calmly along a smooth sea, so will you pass peacefully down the stream of your maiden life, until its race shall be run."

"But who will be my husband?" enquired the eager Cicely.

"You will never marry," he returned.

"Never marry!" echoed the girl.

"No. You had a chance once, and you threw it away. You will not have another."

Georgiana stared in amazement at the joke of Cicely's having received an offer, and *rejected* it. But look at Cicely—at her glowing colour: that alone will tell you his words are true. The assistant-surgeon, designated by her sisters as the elephant, the monkey in spectacles, had made Cicely an offer in secret, and she refused it.

"And be thankful that your life is destined to be so uneventful," continued the speaker to her. "There are two paths in this world; one is of peace—and a very small one it is, but little frequented; the other is full of thorns. To few people indeed is it given to tread the former; but you are one of them."

The dismayed and angry Cicely felt her face grow hot and cold by turns, as she listened to this most unwelcome prediction; and she only awoke from her astonishment, to hear the man address her sister. Georgiana had removed her gloves at his desire, touched the cards as Cicely did, and waited. Florence had drawn nearer, and she saw, what she had never noticed before, that the inside of Georgiana's hands, even to the ends of the fingers, were completely covered with lines; small lines, crossed, and re-crossed again. The old man sat looking at them with his glass to his eye.

"Your fate in life will be widely different from your sister's," he said at length, "for you will meet with, and endure, more cares than I should choose to tell you of."

"And not be married either, perhaps!" burst forth the indignant Cicely.

"You will be married in God's own good time," he continued to Georgiana, taking no heed of Cicely. "And though your life will be full of cares, as I now predict, there is no cause for you to be dismayed, for it will not be without its compensations. Your home will lie in a foreign land, one washed by the troubled waters of the Pacific Ocean. *He* is there now; and you will not see him yet: not for years."

"Not there *now?*" exclaimed Georgiana, surprised out of the remark.

"May be your thoughts are running upon one nearer and dearer," he rejoined: "but neither of you"—and he looked alternately at Georgiana and Florence—"will marry *him;* so let there be no more bitter feeling between you. You have wasted by far too much on these dreams already; dreams that for both of you will come to nought. The wife destined for *him* is as yet a child, sporting in her mother's home: neither of you will ever be more to him than you are now."

Georgiana, in her surprise, could not find ready words of answer. Florence was indignant.

"You are mistaking your vocation, sir," she haughtily exclaimed. "I did not come here to have my fortune told."

"I will not tell it, young lady," he quietly replied. "Nevertheless, I should like to be allowed to take a closer look at your hands. Their marks strike me as being peculiar."

Florence's hands were lying open on the table; she had taken off the large, uncomfortable gloves assumed for disguise. Making no objection, she moved them nearer to him in scornful compliance; perhaps in curiosity. The Wizard examined them long and attentively, glancing aside at the cards from time to time in silence.

"I did not come to you for advice or remark of any kind," repeated Florence, when he looked up.

"So you have informed me: and I know that all I might say would be worse than despised. Yet, if you would listen to me, I could save you even now."

"Save me from what?"

"Nay, why question me? Have you not warned me that you wish to hear nothing?"

"I wish to hear this," she answered, her tone of scorn growing deeper. "Tell it me, I beg of you."

"It will make no difference whether I do or not," remarked the man, as if speaking to himself. "From the fate which is threatening

you: and which appears"—bending again over her hands—"to be drawing very close now ——"

"Pray what is the fate?" she interrupted.

"I cannot say. I do not know."

Florence laughed a derisive laugh. "Oh, thank you: that is quite sufficient. You would warn me to avoid some fate or other, but you don't know what! Thank you, sir, once again, for your valuable advice. I have already said I did not come to seek it." She made him a half-mocking curtsey, and turned to her companions, saying that as their business was over, it was time to be going. The young ladies turned to leave, and the Wizard rose.

"To you who did come to seek it, I have no more to add," he said. "Your life," looking at Cicely, "will be one of uneventful calm, bearing for you no great pleasures and no great pains. And yours," turning to Georgiana, "will be one scene of cares and crosses from the day you relinquish your father's name; and his for which you will exchange it, is to you as yet that of a stranger: but do not forget that the life will bring to you its compensations. There is nothing more; so go back quickly, all of you, to whence you came."

The two sisters laid, each, a heavy piece of silver on the table, as they turned to depart. Florence laid nothing. She was about to follow them, when the old man placed his hand upon her shoulder, his strange, deep-set eyes riveting their gaze on hers.

"You have good seed in your heart," he said earnestly, "and your faults are but those of youth and thoughtlessness: I will not have it on my conscience that I suffered you to pass this threshold without a warning, unavailing though it will be. For the next three or four days, say until Monday—or—perhaps—Tuesday—say until Tuesday shall have glided into the womb of the past, keep strictly the Commandments; break not one either in the spirit or the letter: and then years of happiness may yet be yours."

"And if I do not?" asked Florence.

"I have told you that you will not. In less than the time I have mentioned to you, you will, I fear, have gone whither we are all hastening."

"If danger threatens me," she persisted, "why not tell me its nature, that I may avoid it?"

"In asking the question, you are but mocking still," he sadly said, "but I will answer it. That some great danger threatens to overtake you, is certain; its precise nature I know not: such close knowledge is not given us. But it seems to me that it will arise out of some fault of your own—I think, self-willed disobedience. Now go: I have fulfilled my duty."

He resumed his chair as he spoke, and the three girls turned and were gone.

"Of all canting, story-telling impostors," broke out Cicely, before

they were well in the street, being unable longer to control her exasperation, "that wicked old animal beats all."

Cicely truly believed so. For he had said she would never be married: and if all the wise men breathing had sworn to that, she would not have given credit to it.

"You don't believe in him, then?" said Georgiana, whose spirits seemed rather subdued by the visit.

"Believe in him!" retorted Cicely. "I would give a thousand pounds, if I had it, to be Mayor of Worcester for one day, just to have him put in the stocks. The wretched old idiot!"

Florence Erskine remained silent, her reflections full of uneasiness and perplexity. She had maintained during the visit a mood of contempt and disbelief: to say that she came away in such would be wrong. The extraordinary power with which that man, wizard or no wizard, divined her and Georgiana's most secret feelings, puzzled her: their jealousy of each other, which she had believed could be known to none; the positive assertion that neither of them would marry de Courcy; with the solemn prediction that in a space of time which might be counted by hours, some untoward fate threatened to overtake her, *he* evidently pointed to death! Mixed with these thoughts, came recurring the remembrance of that tale of her childhood—that should she ever have her fortune told, she would be at the end of her life: this man had now said she was at the end of it.

"I told you," she laughed, but the laugh sounded bitterly hollow in her companions' ears—"I told you what you would meet with, Cicely: you will believe in fortune-tellers now! And he—he—that daring charlatan, presumed to warn ME against breaking the Commandments!"

Wrapping their shawls round them, and drawing their bonnets over their faces, they hastened through the now lighted streets, and gained their home and got in undiscovered.

Sunday was the next day. In the afternoon Captain Erskine went as usual to visit his relative, and Florence afterwards took her way to Mrs Juniper's, the girls having invited her. The disagreeable impression left by the Wizard's words had faded away; reason had reasserted its power, and Florence was herself again. The surgeon's family usually attended church on Sunday evenings, but this night two or three of the girls got themselves excused on the score of the heat, and stayed at home to chatter. When Florence made ready to go home, a servant was waiting to see her thither; but de Courcy, coming in at the moment, told the maid her services were not required, and went with Florence himself.

They walked away towards her home, in the sultry, overpowering air, their pace so slow as to be scarcely perceptible, she listening to his honeyed words. Ah! she thought not now of the old Wizard and his predictions; when with *him*, the fulness of her happiness was all in all. And thus conversing with each other, they

neared the cottage. No other dwellings were near to it, no prying eyes could be on view, and de Courcy drew Florence's arm within his, little conscious, either of them, that the worst eyes of all were looking on.

At the window of his small drawing-room stood Captain Erskine. He had come home betimes to make certain preparations connected with his fishing-tackle and bait for the morning's excursion. In the midst of which, happening to look towards the road, he saw his daughter sauntering up the hill, comfortably leaning on the arm of ——

Of whom? The Captain applied his double eye-glass to his eye, wiped it, turned it, and tried it again. Why—good saints protect himself and his outraged ancestors!—it *was* that connexion of Juniper's! They have got to the little gate now, and Florence's hand is held in his as he leads her through it: and Gentleman Erskine's grizzled hair raises itself on end with horror, and his gaze glares on his insulted pedigree, hanging opposite, and he brings his indignant face in close contact with the window-panes.

Florence saw him; and, turning sick with apprehension, wished de Courcy a hasty good night, and went in.

Captain Erskine was by no means a meek man, but never had Florence seen him give way to passion so violent. A half-doubt of the truth flashed across his brain. Florence he knew was beautiful; while this fellow, he half acknowledged to himself, was what women and fools might call attractive. But the doubt was dismissed at once: for Gentleman Erskine's exclusive mind could no more bring itself to suspect Florence capable of an attachment for a man in the position of de Courcy, than for the begrimed official who periodically went up his chimneys: and indeed the ropes on which he himself stood were so exalted, that he could see little difference in the position of the two, the dispenser of medicines and the ramoneur. Oh, terrible disgrace!—she had walked with this man (as he supposed) through the open streets! Worcester had seen her leaning upon the arm of an apothecary, that obscure emigré, who had never known his grandfather! How could this stain be wiped out?

As a preliminary step, when his rage had somewhat expended itself, Captain Erskine forbade his daughter, in the most positive terms man could use, to join the party to Malvern on the morrow. She shivered, she cried, she pleaded for a retraction of his prohibition: all in vain. She might with as much effect have set on and petitioned Jupiter.

"What shall I say," she sobbed. "I told them you consented, and they expect me. What excuse can I offer now?"

"Excuse to them!" he cried, indignantly, "the obligation is on the other side. Make none. Or say it is my pleasure, if you choose: but, go you do not."

"Oh papa!"

"How dare you oppose your will to mine, even in thought?" he demanded. "Are you out of your mind? I forbid you to think or to speak again about their scampering Malvern party. I would rather lock you up, Florence, than suffer you to join it. Disobey me if you dare."

When Florence rose the next morning, her head aching and her eyes heavy, she found a brief, stern note left for her by her father, who had departed on the fishing excursion. It reiterated his prohibition of the previous night; once more enjoining her not to disobey him. She wrote a line to Mrs. Juniper, saying she was unable to accompany them, and sent it. In answer to it came Mr. de Courcy, requiring, in Mrs. Juniper's name, to know the why and the wherefore. Florence simply said her father wished her not to go; but of his positive prohibition and his violence she did not like to tell. De Courcy supposed Captain Erskine's objection might be put down to the score of the heat, which was excessive. He treated the prohibition lightly. Persuasion is wondrously effective when uttered by loved lips, and Florence wavered. She made a compromise with her conscience, and assuring *it* that no persuasion should induce her to disobey her father by going to Malvern, she yet consented to accompany de Courcy to Mrs. Juniper's, to tell them in person that she could not go.

It was then ten o'clock, the hour fixed for starting. The party of invited friends were assembling, all eager and joyous, the carriages waited at the door, and Florence was tempted on all sides: her scruples were assailed, her somewhat confused accounts of her father's "wishes" laughed at.

"The heat!" exclaimed Mrs. Juniper, catching up de Courcy's notion. "Well, it's bad enough to-day, child, goodness knows; but it won't melt you."

Mrs. Juniper added some convincing arguments, their matter sensible enough, the girls said go she should and must, de Courcy whispered a passionate entreaty, while the good-natured surgeon declared he would bear all the blame, and appease Captain Erskine. And Florence, overpowered by their persuasions and her own yearnings, at length yielded, her conscience pricking her, and her better judgment fighting a fierce pitched battle.

It was half-past ten when they started, eighteen or twenty of them, a goodly cavalcade. Two post-carriages from the Crown in Broad Street, and the surgeon's chaise, de Courcy driving the latter.

"You will go with *me*, Florence," he had said to her, as they all stood on the threshold of the door. But, even as he spoke, Georgiana Juniper mounted, without assistance, into the front seat of her father's carriage; and Mr. Juniper, coming up, took Florence's hand, and placed her in one of the large ones by the side of his wife.

The post-boys started. Down Broad Street, over the bridge, increasing their speed as they bowled along the open road leading to

St. John's, and lessening it as they came to the houses. St. John's passed, they drove through the turnpike-gate, and were fairly on the road to Malvern in all the heat. None could remember such heat as hung that day over the Faithful City.

Mrs. Juniper complained piteously. "What's my face like?" she suddenly asked. "Is it crimson?"

"I never saw any crimson so red, mamma," answered Julia, turning round from the box, where she was seated with young Mr. Parker, who was reading for the Church, there being a living in his family, to look at Mrs. Juniper's face. He had just come down from Oxford, after being plucked in his Little Go.

"What a mercy it is that we thought of bringing that bottled perry!" continued Mrs. Juniper. "As to the ale and wine, I don't think we ought to touch it till the sun's gone down, unless we'd like to be laid up with brain fever. I never felt such a day as this."

"Nor anyone else in this country, ma'am," observed young Mr. Parker. "It is said, that strange old wizard has predicted this day will be a memorable one. I think he is about right for once."

Julia Battlebridge turned again and glanced at Florence with a meaning look. Florence sat silent and pale. She did not absolutely fear the words the strange man had said to her; she did not positively fear that old prediction of her childhood; and yet both kept floating in her brain, mingling with the thoughts of her own disobedience, and what would be the anger of her father. That strange injunction of the wizard's, bidding her not break any of the commandments, had come back to her with vivid vehemence. She had listened in resentment to the unnecessary warning, haughty pride buoying up her own self-sufficiency — she, Florence Erskine, break a Commandment! Yet, not thirty-six hours had elapsed before she had fallen into the snare and the sin: she had broken the one which says, Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother.

Wick was passed, and then the old and most dangerous bridge at Powick, and, passing the turnpike-gate, the horses bore up the ascent, turning off opposite the Lion. Soon the windings of the road brought the towering hills in view, with their various hues, blue, brown, green, and golden; and de Courcy saw that his pretty white sea-shells were indeed houses. Away cantered the postboys, on to Newland Common, its geese as plentiful as ever, leaving on their left the turning to Madresfield, Lord Beauchamp's seat. The Swan, with its swinging sign-board, passed on the right, the horses began their slow pace up the Link, noted for its upsets, and the party reached the village of Great Malvern at last.

They drove to the Crown, and alighted. The carriages were to be left there. Mrs. Juniper was shown to the pleasantest sitting-room with the lovely view, ordered a plate of sandwiches for those who wished to partake of any, and said the party would return

for tea at six o'clock in the evening. It was a programme often carried out: luncheon on the hills; tea at the Crown or the Bellevue.

Meanwhile the hampers of provisions—Mrs. Juniper's fowls and tartlets and à-la-mode beef were taken from the carriages, now surrounded by a shoal of donkeys, with their drivers; sunburnt women, boys, and girls.

"Are we to ride or walk up?"

"Who asked the question on such a day as this?" cried young Mr. Parker, looking down from the balcony. "Mrs. Juniper shall have that one," pointing to a large strong grey donkey. "And, I say, my good donkey-women, give an eye to your saddles: they have a habit of turning, you know."

Mr. de Courcy chose to walk; not a very wise determination, as Mrs. Juniper told him, with the thermometer at its present height. *She* did not know that the heat and the toilsome climb were to him as nothing, whilst he could thus keep by the side of Florence Erskine. And so they commenced their ascent of the hill, towards St. Ann's Well, and Mrs. Juniper sincerely wished there was a carriage way to it, that she might avoid the zig-zag path of the jolting donkey. In later years one was made.

They took de Courcy to an elevated spot, and then made him turn suddenly to look at the glorious beauty of the scene. The amazing expanse of prospect extending out around; the peaceful plains, lying broad and distinct; the blending together of wood and dale; the striking contrast of the green fields with the golden hue of the ripening corn; Bredon Hill there, the Old Hills here, hills everywhere; the few mansions scattered about with a sparing hand, giving life to the landscape: and Worcester, fair to view, lying near, with its fine old cathedral and St. Andrew's tapering spire.

"Yes, it is very beautiful," sighed de Courcy, drawing a deep breath of reverence as he lifted his hat. "Great indeed are the glories of God's marvellous works!"

Mrs. Juniper's voice brought him back to common life. "If you'll believe me, them silly apes are going on to the top!"

Turning from his somewhat prolonged reverie, de Courcy saw that the younger members of the party were continuing their way up the hill: the elder ones had dismissed their donkeys and were gathered in and about St. Ann's Well.

"Have you lost your wits, you young people?" screamed out Mrs. Juniper again.

"No, mamma," replied Bessy, looking round. "Why?"

"If you ride to the top in this heat, you'll be half-dead."

"Oh we don't care for that. We shall be back for dinner."

Mrs. Juniper sat down inside the room at the Well. Some of the more active ones began to unpack the hampers. One gentleman, an old Worcester lawyer, who was rather puffy, threw himself flat on the

grass, wishing he could get a breath of air. In vain: the atmosphere was still as death.

"Decidedly those young ones will be broiled," he remarked.

"Why, here they are, back already!" exclaimed Mr. Parker's mother, as she caught sight of the white cloths of the donkeys, slowly winding round from the heights above. "We shall see how they feel after their broiling."

"I have heard tell of women in Ingee," remarked Mrs. Juniper, extending her head outside to get a view of the broiled, "who have voluntary sat right down in a huge fire to be roasted alive. I'd not say that there can lie much choice between that and the going up the hill to-day, as them geese were doing; especially if 'twas a-foot, like Mr. de Courcy."

"It was impossible to endure it," called out Cicely, in explanation. "I believe, if we had gone on, we should have felt fit to drop, as mamma said, and the poor animals too. So that's why we are back again."

Heavy and listlessly passed the time, in the unbearable heat, till they sat down to dinner, and sincerely did they wish their excursion had been deferred to a more propitious day. But young and healthy people cannot be still long; and some of them, when dinner was over, began to wander up the hill again. The heat was really dreadful, not perhaps quite so burning as it had been in the morning, for the blazing sun had gone in, but the oppressive, sultry sensation had increased. It seemed as if they could scarcely draw their breath; and ominous clouds of copper colour were gathering in the sky. Unheeding the weather, and regardless of fatigue, de Courcy and Florence, side by side, at length reached the top of the hill: their companions had dropped off one by one, and they were alone. There they stood some time, that he might admire the vale of Herefordshire; a fine prospect also, but not like the magnificent one on the other side. And then, turning to the left, they continued their way on the hill's summit, and gained the little round building, scarcely larger or higher than a good-sized watch-box, known as Lady Harcourt's Tower.

Here they entered and sat down; and de Courcy, drawing her to his side, whispered once more his words of love. Eloquent words they were, more eloquent than they need have been, for where love reigns in a heart, as it did in hers, eloquence is needed not: and she, lost in the perfect rapture of the moment, put her compunctions of conscience aside. She forgot her disobedience; she forgot the certain refusal of her father to sanction the future; she braved the thought of his anger, and promised to be the wife of Louis de Courcy.

A flash of lightning startled them; and, as they rushed outside the tower, a long, loud, frightful echo told that the storm had begun. Never, perhaps, has a storm come on with more rapid violence: the clouds had gathered together, black, lurid, angry, the forked lightning

playing amongst them; the thunder reverberated in the hollows of the hills; and the atmosphere appeared as if tainted with death, it was so still and terrible.

"We must make the best of our way down, Florence," hastily cried de Courcy.

But there came, flying on to the top of the hill, five or six of their party. The lawyer before mentioned and his daughter, two of the Juniper girls, and a lad of fifteen and his sister. They had been close to the top when the thunder commenced its roaring, and were running along now, to take shelter in Lady Harcourt's Tower.

"I do not like it," interposed de Courcy, as they were about to enter. "We shall be safer going down the hill than there."

"Not at all," dissented the lawyer, who was puffing with his recent exertion. "I remember, when a boy, a party of us being overtaken in this very spot by a most violent thunderstorm. We shut ourselves in here, there was a door to the place then, and were quite safe and comfortable; whilst in the valley below there were two cows and a milkmaid killed."

Still de Courcy did not like it; but not one was willing to descend the hill with him and brave the fury of the storm, preferring the shelter of Lady Harcourt's Tower. Their situation was appalling enough. Perched on the summit of one of the highest of the Malvern hills, the valley beneath them appeared as if it were miles away, and they planted in the air, on that narrow ledge between the earth and the sky, amidst all the roar and battle of the elements.

The storm increased in violence; peal succeeded flash, and flash succeeded peal without an instant's cessation; the heavens were in a blaze of light from one extremity to the other, and a noise, as of a thousand cannons, seemed bursting close overhead. The poor girls were fearfully terrified. De Courcy tried to reassure them, but could not succeed: a scream from one, a shriek from another; tears and sobs; exclamations, that the lightning blinded and the thunder deafened them, were mixed with murmured prayers and dread whispers that they should never get down again alive. Florence was quiet, betraying less terror than the rest. Why was it? Because she was by the side of *him*, her lover; and so all-absorbing to her was the consciousness of her love for him, that other emotions, and even the dread of danger, were partially lost in it: his protection seemed to be all-sufficient for security, as it was for happiness. De Courcy had thrown his arm round her and drawn her to his side, where she quietly stood, her face hidden against him, and her heart beating with its sense of bliss. Cicely Juniper he had drawn to him on the other side.

"There!" he exclaimed, pointing to a distant part of the heavens. It was a small ball of fire, darting down to the earth. The sight was but momentary: before the others could look, it was gone.

"I must say I wish we were safe down," exclaimed the old lawyer. "I wonder how Mrs. Juniper and the rest feel at the Well?"

Before the words had well passed his lips, there came a vivid flash, a terrific peal, and a scream from Cicely Juniper, who declared the tower was shaking. It may have been her fancy, or it may have been that the tower did shake with a shock of electricity, the others felt nothing; but Florence Erskine had fallen on the ground at de Courcy's side. There was no perceptible change in her countenance, except that it was white and still.

"She has fainted!" exclaimed the lawyer, stooping, and pulling at her hand.

"It is the faintness of DEATH!" shuddered de Courcy, bending down his ashy face. "I fear, I fear it is death." He raised Florence in his arms, as he spoke; he called her by every endearing name, unmindful now of the ears of those around; he pressed his white cheeks to hers, vainly hoping to feel signs of breath and life. But there was no further life for Florence Erskine in this world, for she had indeed been struck and killed by lightning. And when the wailing and terror-stricken party returned that night to Worcester, carrying the dreadful tidings with them to Captain Erskine, the ill-fated young lady, cold and dead, had to be left at Malvern.

It had, in truth, been a remarkable and fatal day, as the strange man, the Wizard, had foretold. On the following morning, Cicely, in her horror and perplexity, disclosed to Mr. Juniper the particulars of their visit to this man, with his prediction regarding Florence, and the surgeon went to Lowesmoor at once to seek him out. But he had disappeared; he was gone, none knew exactly when, certainly not whither; he had left the city.

Mr. Juniper plied the landlady of the house with questions. She said that on the Sunday evening he had called her to his presence, paid her what little claims she had against him, with something over, and told her he should probably leave on the morrow. On the Monday morning while he was at breakfast she went up-stairs to make his bed, and there she saw his little black portmanteau ready packed. But she did not see him leave the house, or know at what hour he really went.

Mr. Juniper could discover no more than that. Yet he would have liked to: he would have liked to put a few questions to the man, for he felt intensely puzzled by him. He had his reasons. This Wizard, or whatever he was or might call himself, had betrayed a knowledge of things, which, it seemed impossible (unless by more than human inspiration) he could have known or learnt in any way. One instance shall be given.

At a short distance from Worcester there lived two small respectable farmers, related to one another and occupying adjoining farms. On the Saturday morning, the same day on which, later, the Juniper girls paid their visit to the Wizard, a daughter of each of these farmers walked into Worcester as usual to keep market: their baskets of cream-cheese, poultry, eggs, and butter being conveyed

thither by a man on horseback. They wrangled as they walked: Phillis D. had brought her little sister with her, which displeased Esther J. "It's not my fault," pleaded Phillis, defending herself warmly: "When I came downstairs from putting my things on, there was Sally all ready in her bonnet and tippet, and mother said she was coming with me. How could I help bringing her, I'd like to know? I did try; I said the walk would be too much for her this hot weather; but mother answered me shortly that the child was looking puny, and it would do her good."

"All the same, you should have somehow contrived not to bring her just to-day," retorted Esther.

For these two young women were intending to get their fortunes told. Having heard the marvellous things said of the Wizard, they wished to benefit by his divinations as well as other people did, and perhaps get promised a husband apiece in some flourishing young farmer. The visit had been planned for the previous Saturday, but a matter prevented its being carried out; so they meant to pay it to-day without fail: if it were put off yet to another week, the Wizard might have left Worcester. Of course Sally's presence was a tremendous drawback, but they must make the best of it.

By dint of selling their excellent wares cheaper than usual, they were at liberty before one o'clock and bent their steps from the market-house down to Lowesmoor: promising Sally dire punishment for all time to come if she ever breathed a word of what she was about to see and hear. But these warnings, administered in going through Silver Street, produced an effect which they had not calculated upon. The child was seized with intense terror. She had heard of the Wizard, and entertained a most unreasoning fear of him, fully believing he would eat her up at sight, as the wolf ate up Red Riding Hood. Sally was a pretty little girl of ten years old, constitutionally timid, and she burst into a fit of sobs and cries. The young women shook her and slapped her. Finding that did little good, they presently, after turning out of Silver Street, bought her some ginger-bread nuts and bulls-eyes—which in a degree soothed the tears, if not the fear.

The Wizard was alone when they entered. While he proceeded to tell the fortunes of the elder girls, the little one was put to sit on one of the chairs at the end of the room: but she wept aloud, and trembled from head to foot Once it seemed to distract the Wizard: he paused in what he was saying, and looked round.

"Who is the child? What is she crying for?"

"She is my sister, sir, and she was afraid to come here," answered Phillis D. "Sally, you naughty girl, hush your sobs directly. Who do you suppose is going to harm you?"

"There is nothing here to harm you, my child," spoke the wise man, gently. "Don't be afraid."

This address seemed to have quite an opposite effect from the

kindly one intended. Sally, after a moment's silence from dumb terror, went on sobbing worse than before.

At the close of the interview, when the young women were departing well satisfied, for they had each been promised fairly good luck in life as well as a husband, the Wizard rose and put his hand upon Sally's shoulder.

"Cry on, my child, for you have good cause to," he said to her with sad impressiveness. "You will reach home to find you have lost the best friend you ever had in life."

They took their journey homewards, the young women by far too much engrossed by their own future to pay heed to the wise man's parting words to the child, or speculate upon what they could mean. Sally was promised a new doll if she held her tongue.

Esther J.'s gate was the first reached, and she passed through it. Phillis and Sally D. went on to their own house: which they found full of distress and confusion. Their father was dead. Farmer D. had dropped down that morning in a fit of apoplexy. Poor little Sally had indeed lost her best friend in life—her father.

Now the reader must make the best and the worst that he can of this. It is strictly true.

Mr. Juniper did not know what to make of it. He was at the farm when the daughters got in, having been the medical man sent for: and Phillis, beside herself with excitement and grief, repeated to him what the Wizard had said to the child. Mr. Juniper considered it strange. It might of course have been but a saying at hazard, curiously fulfilled. The only other solution he could think of was—that the Wizard must in some way (there had been time) have heard of Mr. D.'s death: yet it seemed unlikely. Some other unaccountable sayings of the man had previously become known to Mr. Juniper, and he determined to pay him a visit the following week. But, as already stated, he went too late; the man was gone.

Louis de Courcy never flirted with Georgy Juniper again; from that hour he was a wiser and a graver man. The death of the ill-fated Florence took effect upon them all, and henceforward the girls were less careless, more staid and sober. Georgiana married in the course of years, and went over seas with her husband; and poor Cicely's wedding never came at all. Her sisters, one after another, quitted the parent home; but she was left. And in later years Cicely grew to think her own life was the happiest, for it was free from care.

Never again was the Wizard heard of in Worcester. Whence he had derived his information, that spirit of divination which he really appeared to possess, none could, or did, pretend to speculate—for indeed this record of him has been no fancy sketch. Those who were living at the time, witnesses to the stir he caused, are dead and gone; and few of a later generation remain yet in Worcester to retain remembrance of the Chronicle.

"Floreat Semper Fidelis Civitas."

THE HOMES OF THE PRINCESS LOUISE IN CANADA.

By Mrs. Clark Murray.

The Citadel: Residence of Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne in Quebec.

THE proposal that a Princess of the House of England should make her residence in a British Colony for a term of five years was received by the Canadian world with some little surprise, which amounted to actual incredulity among the inhabitants of the colony itself. But as the proposal shaped itself into purpose, and the purpose into preparation, enthusiasm took the place of doubt, and all Canada became astir with anticipation of the unprecedented honour. Had the auspicious event taken place during the summer months, it is probable that Her Royal Highness would have sailed up the Gulf of the magnificent St. Lawrence, with pine odours from the far-stretching forests floating on the breeze, and the unpretentious but picturesque cottages of the French farmers dotting the shores of the river. Arriving later in the season than navigation is considered safe in these waters, the steamship *Sarmatian* made for Halifax Harbour, and the Princess first set foot on Canadian soil in the most ancient English settlement of the Dominion, with her august husband, the Marquis of Lorne, the newly-appointed governor.

The place was originally called Chebucto, a name still preserved as that of a promontory in the neighbourhood, but was afterwards named Halifax, in honour of a nobleman who accompanied a band of adventurous settlers under the Hon. Edward Cornwallis on his mission as Governor-in-Chief, 1749. It has now grown to the capital of Nova Scotia, the modern Acadia, and occupies a most commanding site, overlooking one of the finest harbours in the world, with anchorage

enough for the entire British navy. It is decorated by public gardens, ponds and fountains, and surrounded by pretty walks and drives.

The whole province enjoys a most healthful and invigorating climate; with less of the extreme heat, which, though rendering some of the sister provinces of the Dominion more desirable for agriculture, deprives them of much charm of residence.

The principal industries of the people are among their wealth of forest, and mine, and sea. Coal has been worked for over a hundred years, and indeed Nova Scotia is the only part of Canada where this commodity has been found, at least in available quantities, and close enough to other minerals to make these of any value. The

RIDEAU HALL THE RESIDENCE OF THE PRINCESS IN THE CAPITAL.

gold mines are mainly in the vicinity of Halifax; a bar from one of these, recently brought to that city, weighing 800 ounces, at a value of 16,000 dollars. But the fisher-folk have made Evangeline's country more famous than its miners have done, and bring annually to market an enormous wealth from the treasures of the deep in codfish, mackerel, herring, haddock, lobster, and various kinds of mollusca. The lobsters find their way principally to the West Indies.

Halifax is within easy access of opportunities for rod and gun, which might tempt even the most fastidious sportsman. The streams of the Province abound in trout and salmon, and its woods in duck, snipe, woodcock, and plover, with an occasional moose or cariboo.

The Nova-Scotians, or Blue Noses, as they are sometimes called, are a most composite people, representing all the modern languages, as well as Indian and Gaelic. Consequently we find a Liverpool, an

Inverness, and a Londonderry; a Mabou, a Bras D'or, and a Wagamatcook; a Lunenburg, an Annapolis, and a Pugwash; a Tatamagouche, a Petit de Gras, and a Shubenacadie.

During the summer of 1534, Jacques Cartier made his first voyage to North America, spending much time and patience in search of a passage to continue his route westward. Disappointed, but not despairing, he returned to France for the winter, carrying with him some Indians, and made preparations for another expedition on a larger scale.

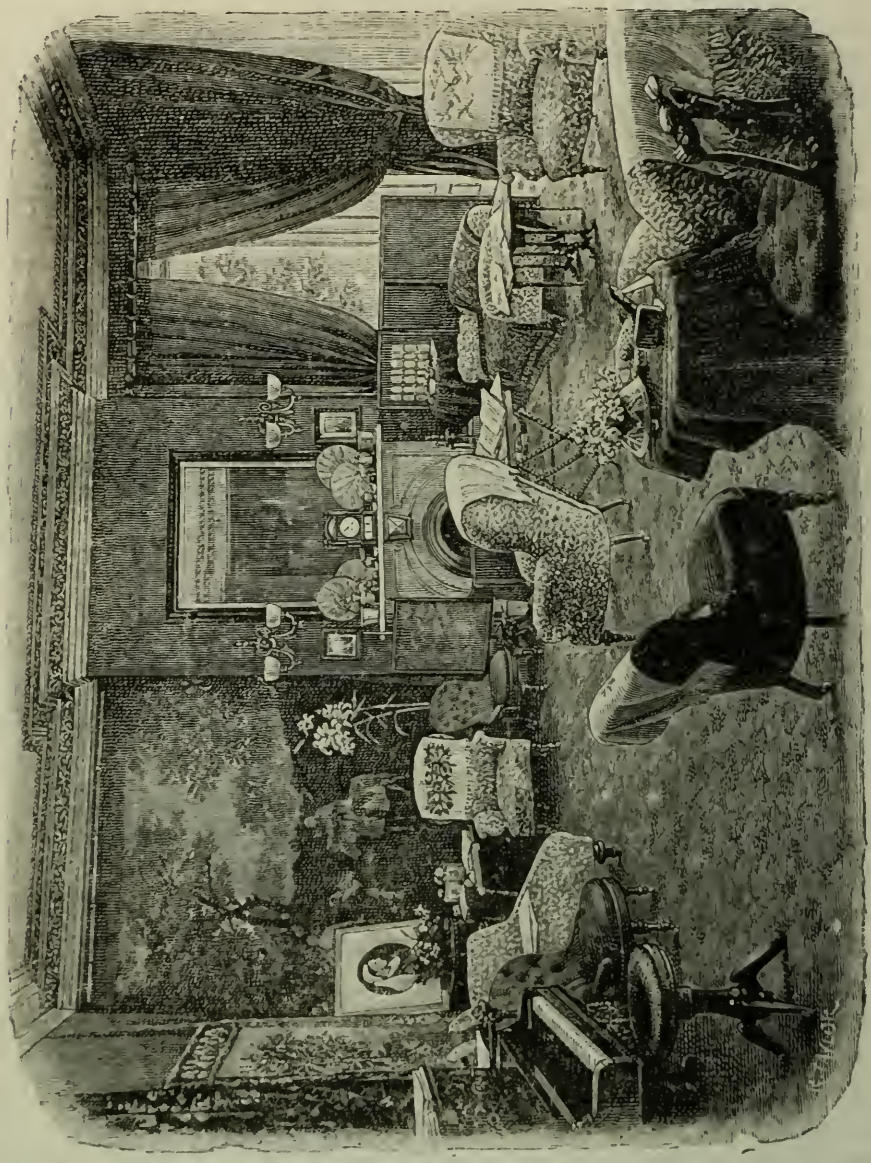
The following May saw him once more set sail; when, encouraged by information from his captive Indians, he pushed his way up the St. Lawrence, the savages on the shores mistaking his ships for canoes with wings. By the mouth of the River Ste Croix, now called St. Charles, and at the foot of a high rocky promontory, he came upon a settlement of Indians, fortified after their rude fashion, whose chief's name was Donnacona. By tact and generosity, Cartier secured for himself such an amicable reception among these natives, that after exploring some distance further up the great river, he returned with his adventurers to winter among his new friends.

But it was reserved for Champlain, on visiting the same spot seventy-three years later, the Indians and their fort gone, to recognise the natural advantages of the situation for a colony in New France; and the work of landing men and supplies was quickly followed by the building of dwellings, the construction of a fort, and the cultivation of a corner of land.

Then came conflict with the natives, war when necessary, treaty when possible, and eventually trade when practicable. When one bears in mind the religious intentions which gave a tone to all the transactions of the pioneers of France in the New World, the picture becomes quickly filled up by priests for the faithful, and chapels for the priests; teachers for the children, and schools for the teachers; nurses for the sick, and hospitals for the nurses; governors, courtiers, and soldiers. And thus, though surrounded by barbarism, suspicion, and implacable hatred, and torn by rival jealousies within, there grew, however slowly, out of the ashes of the Indian village of Stadacona, the modern city of Quebec, to which every Canadian points with pride as the Gibraltar of America, and which seemed to be a specially favourite residence of Her Royal Highness.

Occupying a site at once commanding and impressive, on a precipitous cliff, crowned by an almost impregnable fortress, Quebec possesses historical interest which ranks it with most of the ancient cities of the Old World, more than with the ephemeral growths of the New. Its wooden quays, tortuous streets, old-fashioned carriages, and antiquated buildings, preserved in much of their original freshness by the purity of the atmosphere, are in peculiar harmony with the quaintness of the French laws and customs of its inhabitants, and render it one of the most attractive spots on the North American continent.

Although the summer port for most of the ocean traffic of the Dominion, Quebec is not a city of rapid growth, its population having increased only about 3,000 during the last ten years. Owing to the liberality with which it has been the principle of England to deal with her conquests, the French inhabitants of Canada enjoy their laws,

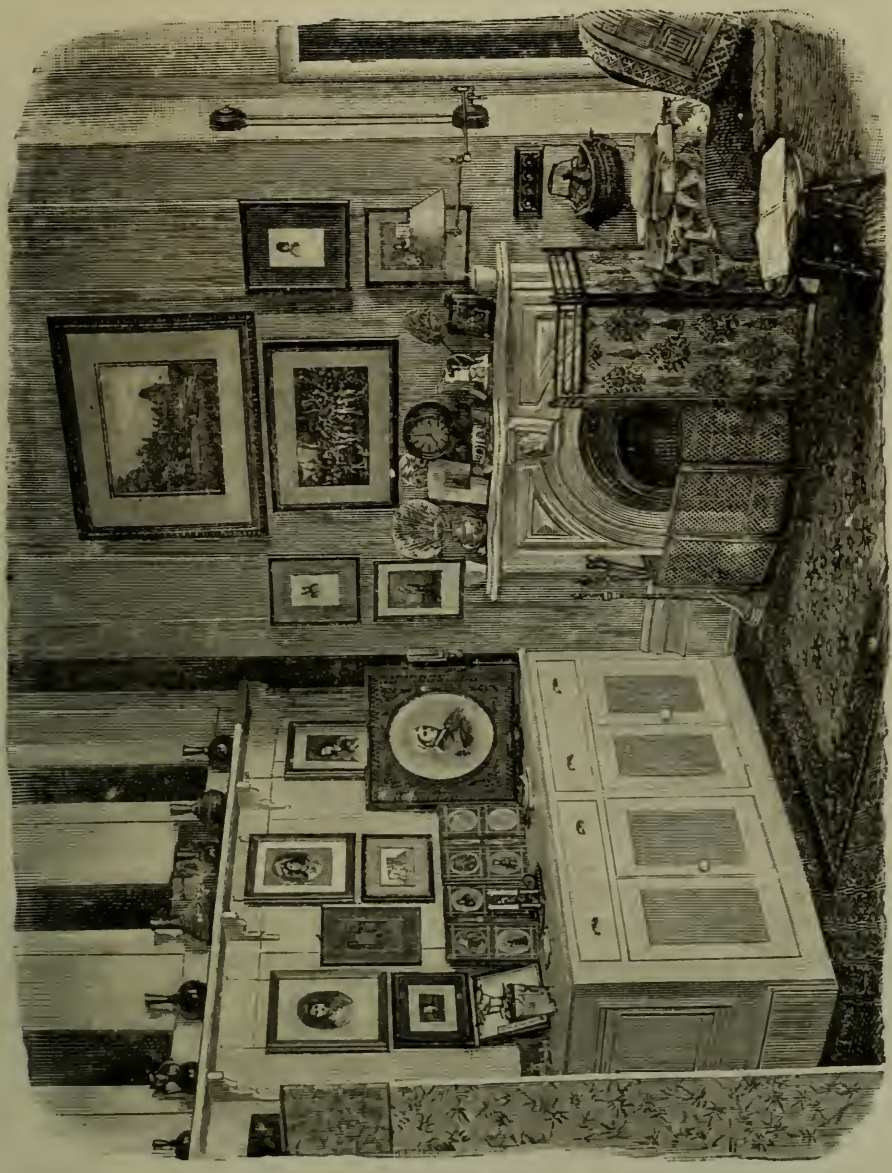


THE BLUE DRAWING-ROOM RIDEAU HALL.

language, and religion, and their English neighbours are beginning to discover what that implies. In agriculture it means the implements of last century; in education little more than the church catechism; in legislation the privileges for "The Church," the taxes for the heretics; and in everything the consent of the clergy. So that not only does immigration pass westward from Quebec, which is peculiarly a French city, but Protestant enlightenment and progress are being forced out of the whole province, wearied of a battle against a

million of a majority. New France is still as French as Old France, and much more faithful to Rome; and should His Holiness of the Vatican ever be driven homeless, Quebec will be the first to lay her fealty at his feet.

Before Cartier settled for the winter with the Indians at Stadacona,



PRINCESS LOUISE'S BOUDOIR, RIDEAU HALL.

he resolved to see something more of the great river he was exploring, and in spite of the assurance of Donnacona that certain death awaited him, he set out, with the consolation that "God would guard all true believers from every danger."

Continuing his course, he came upon another village, situated on an island just below the confluence of a large tributary with the mighty waters that were bearing him along. Here, donning his best raiment, and providing himself with conciliatory presents, he landed, climbed

a mountain in the background, and, enchanted with the view of river and forest which lay beneath him, named the place Mount Royal.

When Champlain followed in the footsteps of Cartier, this village of Indians also had disappeared; but not to Champlain, as in the case of Quebec, belongs the honour of founding the city which is built on its site.

A religious enthusiast of Anjou, a tax-gatherer by profession, whilst at his devotions one day at La Flèche, declared that he heard a voice from Heaven calling upon him to found a new order of nuns, and a hospital to be conducted by them, on an island called Montreal in Canada. About the same time, a young Parisian priest was praying in the Church of St. Germain des Près, when a voice said to him that he was ordained to form a society of priests intended for the propagation of the True Faith among the Indians at Montreal. Both priest and tax-gatherer were unknown to each other, and were equally in ignorance regarding the island called Montreal, and regarding Canada; but they were miraculously put into possession of such information as made them acquainted with each other like intimate friends when they met, and enabled them to organise their scheme and put their designs into execution.

In the discussion and the maturing of their plans, Providence lent further aid to these devotees by sending to them, in the person of Paul de Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve, a soldier-governor capable of undertaking the control of the new enterprise, and a small select sisterhood, who were "nothing daunted, either by the ocean, the wilderness, the solitude, or the Iroquois."

The little colony was solemnly consecrated to the work, and was wafted across the seas by blessing and prayer. When they arrived at their destination, after no eventless voyage, an altar to the Virgin was raised amid the wild flowers and the bursting foliage of the month of May, hymns of praise were sung, Maisonneuve and his followers devoutly kneeling, and the place, henceforth to be called Villemarie de Montreal, was solemnly consecrated to the Holy Family.

On this spot stands the Custom House of the modern Montreal, and although a public square perpetuates the name of Cartier, a small island in the river that of Champlain's wife, and an insignificant street that of Maisonneuve, the great tide of posterity which has followed in the wake of these pioneers has washed away their very memory. The Indian village has its name, Hochelaga, preserved in a suburb, and its site is occupied by a handsome Episcopal cathedral. The skeleton of an Indian in a sitting posture was lately discovered in the neighbourhood, and other relics of those old days are found from time to time in the course of the extension of the city.

Montreal is now the commercial metropolis of the Dominion, for which its natural position is admirably suited. Though nine hundred miles by river from the sea-board, it forms at once the

terminus of ocean navigation for the St. Lawrence and the key to the magnificent chain of canals which, with the inland lakes, opens up the most prosperous part of Canada.

The other places honoured by the residence of the Princess Louise cannot boast such ancient or miraculous parentage as Halifax, Quebec, or Montreal, but are the growth of the development of Canada in more recent years; and from none of them did she seem to escape with much regret to her summer home, chosen among the loveliest scenery of the Intercolonial Railway, and amid the finest and most romantic stream-fishing in Canada, from which salmon, caught by Her Royal Highness herself, in a canoe, with Indian guides, were sent to Windsor Castle.

PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, OTTAWA.

And seldom has rest or change been more thoroughly earned and deserved. For Vice-Regal life is not an idle one, and the Princess, instead of looking upon her exceptional relation to it as an excuse for shirking many of its duties, seemed to regard that relation as an opportunity for performing them in a right royal manner. Many a gay scene of tennis and croquet on the grounds of Rideau Hall was lit up by her presence, and the cold of even a Canadian winter was not sufficient to deter her from gracing skating and other parties: whilst her example in walking, and in the dress adopted for such exercise, was one which is not altogether superfluous in regard to Canadian ladies. Foundation-stones were laid, memorial-trees planted, many hundreds of guests were entertained at dinner, and thousands at balls, theatricals, and drawing-rooms. An interest in all benevolent work; kind words to children in schools and convents;

an appreciation of worth and refinement in whatever degree of the social scale they may have been found; and a dignified affability to all—which is possible only to the truly great—have endeared the Princess Louise to every Canadian heart; whilst the encouragement given by her, as well as by her noble consort, to all that is highest in human nature, and the establishment of an Academy of Art, and a National Society for the advancement of scientific and literary culture, proved that she is following in the footsteps of her royal parents.

VICTORIA SQUARE, MONTREAL.

EVANGELA.

SEEING thee mine eyes grew clearer
With a light divine;
Hearing thee my heart drew nearer
To a sinless shrine.
Knowing thee my soul was lifted
To a world above;
Loving thee my life was gifted
With eternal love.

A. M. H.

A GUILTLESS SINNER.

By E. M. Davy.

TOWARDS three o'clock on a certain gloomy afternoon in November, Mr. Arthur Lee sat at work in his private office. He was twenty-eight years of age, handsome, wealthy, and a bachelor. He had shown hitherto no more disposition of entering the matrimonial state than he had of relinquishing the business habits acquired from his father. Business seemed to be with him—as with his departed parent—the ruling passion of his life.

He was of a reserved disposition, averse to society, especially that of women; and might have remained a bachelor to the end of his days, but for a circumstance which happened on this particular November day.

"A lady, sir," announced the office-boy, at the same time laying a visiting card upon the desk.

"Mrs. de Winton," was engraved upon the card; but the name was unknown to Mr. Lee. He intimated that the lady should be admitted. Whereupon, a tall and graceful woman swept into the office, the frou-frou of whose sable-trimmed velvet draperies made soft unknown music in the place; and the faint scent of some sweet and subtle essence entering with her seemed to pervade the air. Mr. Lee rose and bowed; intuitively he knew this woman to be of a different world from that of his experience.

"How glad I am to see—to know you!" So speaking, she held out a delicately-gloved hand, with which she pressed his warmly. "Mr. Lee, it is impossible for me to regard you as a stranger, though this is our first meeting. I—I—knew—your father!"

Here she sighed softly, as at some half-pleasing, half-sad remembrance; then taking a filmy handkerchief from her muff, and passing it lightly and swiftly across her eyes, she sank gracefully into the chair offered. While doing so she flashed a sudden keen and furtive look at the young man. There was a short pause. Then he asked quite calmly: "Can I be of any service to you, Mrs. de Winton? I do not recollect ever hearing my father speak of you."

"Sentiment won't do—he is too like his father," thought this astute woman of the world. She continued, on a different tack: "Mr. Lee, I will explain as rapidly as I can why I have sought you. The fact is, I have led a roving life for very many years, and am wearied of foreign travel and hotels. I wish to settle down in some English town or city as my home. Yesterday only I arrived at the Station Hotel here, and the idea—inspiration—whim—call it what you will—seized me to make this town my abiding-place;

the only drawback being that I did not know a soul in it. Then remembering that it was your father's native place, I ——"

"May I ask how you became acquainted with my father?" interrupted Mr. Arthur Lee.

"Twenty years ago I met him at the Old Hall Hotel at Buxton. We saw much of each other then; he was in ill-health, and spoke continually to me of you, his only child. A great trouble fell on me at that time. I asked his help; and his *kindness*—" she hesitated, after emphasising the word in a peculiar way—"his *kindness* made on me an impression that never can be effaced. Mr. Lee, I never forget a kindness; I never *forgive an injury*. But let that pass. Some years later I married General de Winton. He barely lived twelve months."

Again she passed her lace handkerchief lightly across her eyes, then after another pause, in a lighter tone continued:

"Now what I want *you*, my dear Mr. Lee, to do for me is this: Put me into communication with a house-agent, an upholsterer and decorator, a banker, and such tradespeople generally as you can recommend. It will not be troubling you too much, will it? No? As to my——means"—she changed her tone to one of fashionable languor, "I will leave these papers with you; they will show you I am not—*poor*. Will you kindly look them over? And—Mr. Lee—*might* I ask you to call upon me at my hotel to-night, after you have perused them?"

To both of these requests Arthur Lee assented in the matter-of-fact manner habitual to him. Smiling and offering a gracious apology for having detained him so long in business hours, the lady departed, Mr. Lee, in duty bound, with calm politeness accompanying her to the door. He then returned to his desk, and continued his interrupted work of considering appeals from tenants for repairs, improvements, and renewals of leases, which his occupation as land agent to the Duke of Wearshire entailed on him. At four o'clock as usual he left the office.

At eight o'clock he presented himself at the Station Hotel, enquired for Mrs. de Winton, and was shown to a private sitting-room by a waiter. At first it occurred to him there must be some mistake. He had entered noiselessly, unannounced, and was almost startled out of his usual equanimity by what he heard and saw.

"Love me, Too-too! Kiss me, Too-too!" a fresh young voice was singing gaily. The owner of it—a girl of apparently some seventeen summers,—dressed in a coquettish robe de chambre, her long nut-brown hair hanging in thick ripples far below her waist—stood immediately beneath the chandelier. Her lovely face was thrown back and turned towards one shoulder, on which was perched, nestling amongst her hair, a small white cockatoo.

The girl was far too pleasantly occupied to notice the stranger's entrance. She kept repeating the above words as a sort of refrain,

pursing her pretty rosy lips together and kissing the bird; which fluttered its wings, and made as though it returned her kisses, cooing softly.

The light from above fell full upon her, and a prettier picture could scarcely be imagined. "Kiss me, Too-too! Love me, Too-too!" sang the fresh sweet voice.

Arthur Lee stood fascinated—spell-bound. His senses drank in the scene with all its bearings as a poet or a painter might have done, though he was neither. All at once she seemed conscious of another presence in the room, and raising a pair of the sweetest, frankest eyes that ever met his own—blue-grey they were, veiled by curved dark lashes—she turned with careless grace, and held out her hand.

"Ah, you are Mr. Lee—my mother's friend, whom she expected? I will call her——"

"No," he said, "not yet." And unconsciously he retained, longer than etiquette demanded, the hand she had placed in his.

His eyes then wandered from her face to the bird upon her shoulder. "What a strange name to call your cockatoo. What does it mean?"

"Oh, don't you know? Isn't he an altogether *too* lovely bird—what could I call him but— Too-too?" she answered laughing. "Are you fond of birds?" she continued. "But what a silly question! I might as well ask do you like people. There must be loveable and hateable among both. I have not a friend in England, Mr. Lee, but Too-too. I have just come from a convent in France, where most of my life has been spent. Too-too was a sailor's bird as we crossed the channel; when we landed he would not leave me, so I bought him. I am teaching him to love me. Do you think he will?"

"Who or what could not love you?" thought Mr. Lee, as fairly bewitched at first sight by this sweet unconscious creature as ever was mortal man before by womankind.

"Don't you think he may—*in time?*" she enquired deprecatingly.

"I am sure of it. He must.—And your mother—how she ——" must idolise you he would have said; but broke off, ashamed of the significance of his words.

There was, however, nothing but candour in the girl's reply.

"Mamma? Oh, we are almost strangers to each other. You see we are only beginning to be acquainted. I can't sing to her and ask her to love me as I can ask Too-too! I have been nearly all my life in the convent, while my mother has enjoyed a roving life in continental cities. At least, I suppose she has enjoyed it, as she chose it: though I should much prefer to stay in one place.—Oh, Too-too! Are you tired of me? Is it that you also—you—like change?"

The fickle bird, finding itself unnoticed for the moment, had run down and perched itself on Arthur's hand, whence it walked solemnly until it reached his shoulder.

"But that is too unkind. Too-too, Too-too, kiss me, love me!"

and singing again softly the old refrain she approached her lips close to the bird; they were within an inch of Arthur's. He knew it; and trembled with an emotion he had never felt before. Another moment, and he would have yielded to the wild passion with which he was suddenly possessed; he could have pressed his lips to those that advanced to kiss the bird—when the folding doors which he had before seen but scarcely noticed, opened, and Mrs. de Winton entered.

"Leila! *you* here! In such a guise, and with that wretched bird!"—the pretty creature had fluttered back to its mistress. Mr. Lee, what *must* you think? And Leila, my love, your hair ——"

"I thought no harm, mother, and am sure Mr. Lee saw none. You ordered Louise to brush my hair, and let it hang ——"

"Sweet child, good-night. Mr. Lee and I have business together."

Thus dismissed, the girl kissed her mother on both cheeks—French way—and glancing shyly at Arthur, bent her head, smiling half-regretfully, it seemed, then disappeared through the folding doors.

To Arthur Lee it was as though the dark curtain had descended on the most beautiful play he had ever witnessed. The lights were out, and to his mental vision darkness alone was visible.

Mrs. de Winton watched him as he continued looking at the closed doors, a furtive smile upon her lips. Then seating herself asked, so suddenly as effectually to rouse him from his reverie:

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Lee? Were the papers satisfactory?"

"I think they appear to be so," he said, as he obeyed her, and tried to concentrate his thoughts.

"Have you been so kind as to make out the list I asked for?"

He selected a paper from the rest and gave it to her.

"A thousand thanks. To-morrow, quite early, I shall call upon the house agent. Now tell me about yourself."

"Myself? I know of nothing about myself that can be of any interest to you, Mrs. de Winton," he answered gravely.

"Everything concerning your father's son must interest me. They tell me you succeeded to your father's berth—you are agent to the Duke of Wearshire?"

"I am."

"What a thousand pities your father did not leave enough to make you independent!" she exclaimed, watching his countenance closely. I conclude the world—as it usually does in such cases—greatly exaggerated his wealth."

"Why should you come to this conclusion?"

"Pardon me—because you continue still in business."

"That is no reason. I was brought up to despise an idle life."

"Well, I suppose I must look upon you as, comparatively speaking, a poor man. Had the world's report been the true one, and you rich, of course you would have acted very differently."

"How?" And as he spoke one of those rare smiles that occasionally lit up his face, broke over it like a sunray.

"You would have thrown up the duke's agency and turned county gentleman. As you continue to hold it, I conclude you cannot afford to live without it. I am only sorry, Mr. Lee, that fortune has not dealt better with you."

"Supposing I confessed to you ——"

"Confess nothing to me. I hate talking of ways and means. If you have only sufficient for your wants as a bachelor, you are the safer from fortune-hunters. By-the-bye, may I come and see you at your house to-morrow? What is the address? Ellyston Place? Ah, thanks. I will look in about four o'clock, when I have done my house-hunting. You shall give me a cosy cup of tea in your bachelor quarters. I can dispose somehow of that big baby of mine, pro tem. I'll leave her with my maid."

"What, alone in the hotel? Bring her with you, Mrs. de Winton."

"You know what I mean by 'my big baby' then? You regard her as a mere child, too? I am glad of that—so glad! Ah, it is a terrible care to have a female child! In a few years, perhaps some man will want to marry her. If he has rank and title, I may—who knows?—consent to lose her. But, forgive a mother's weakness and folly! You, of all men, can least understand such feelings. At four to-morrow, did we arrange? Ah, yes. Till then, good-night. Good-night!"

When Arthur Lee found himself in the cold outer atmosphere he felt a slight reaction; and as he walked homewards through the lighted streets he went over in his mind the events of the last few hours. First he recalled the words and bearing of his new acquaintance, Mrs. de Winton, and he was vexed with himself that he could not entertain more cordial feelings towards her. Now at first sight that lady had appeared to him a clever woman of the world; yet she had evidently made up her mind that he was a poor man—or at least, as she expressed it, a comparatively poor man—one who was forced to work to live. Whereas, had she listened to the common gossip of the place, or what was much more likely for a clever woman of this world to do—had she enclosed a fee to town she might have obtained, from Somerset House, a copy of his father's will, whereby she would have seen he was not a poor man by any means; but, on the contrary—rich. After all it pleased him that she believed him poor. Had she known otherwise, perhaps ——

A throng of ideas, precepts, warnings, given him by his father, here recurred to him. Mr. Lee, senior, was well known as a woman hater, and as having done his utmost to indoctrinate his principles upon his son.

"Beware of women, Arthur," was his counsel on his death-bed. "They have been a bad lot from Eve downwards. They look on man as their natural prey. They'll wait and watch for him, and sneak and purr to him. Beware most when they are sleekest."

"I've never yet seen the woman I should like to marry, and don't suppose I ever shall," was Arthur's answer. Whereon the old man chuckled, as he said—"That's right, lad. I've saved, and screwed, and pinched myself for you. Don't let a woman spend a hap'orth of my coin."

But by the time Arthur Lee had reached his house in Ellyston Place, and opened the door with his latch-key, such memories had flown to the four winds.

The echoes of a sweet young voice that sang: "Love me, Too-too; kiss me, Too-too!" seemed sounding in his memory, while the graceful form of the beautiful girl with the rippling brown hair and the white bird on her shoulder, was almost as distinctly a reality to his mental vision as was the sweet song to his ear.

On the following afternoon Mrs. and Miss de Winton were shown up by Mr. Lee's housekeeper to his drawing-room. It was a large apartment, furnished in the usual style of forty years ago. The gas was lighted and tea ready on a side table near the fire.

When the host had welcomed and exchanged a few words with his visitors, Mrs. de Winton, with accustomed savoir faire, offered to pour out the tea, and suggested she should play hostess, with the real host and Leila for her guests. This arrangement suited admirably.

"These are by no means the poor bachelor quarters I had been led to expect," said the lady, seating herself at the tea-table and looking appreciatingly at the comfortable surroundings.

"The house, with all in it, is as my father left it. The expense of living here is not more than I can quite well afford," he answered smiling. It pleased, while at the same time it interested and amused him, to keep up this fiction of his poverty.

"I like this house and this locality," she continued: "the houses are well built and handsome. There is a well-to-do air about them that appears lacking in most of the new residences I have been looking at to-day. I have some thoughts of taking the unoccupied house two doors off this, and have appointed to meet the owner to-morrow, when I expect we shall come to terms. Of course he will require references, but with these I am well provided—my London banker and others—therefore I need not ask permission to make use of your name ——"

"If you require it, Mrs. de Winton, my name is at your service."

"O, thanks! A thousand thanks. But my banker ——"

"Mamma, I should think Mr. Lee's name would be of far more value here than that of anyone so far off as London."

Mrs. de Winton flashed a meaning look at Arthur. "Is she not indeed the mere baby I described?" she whispered.

The girl heard the words, and a faint flush rose to her face. She left her seat and, walking to the furthest window, bent her head over some flowering plants, as though examining them closely.

In an instant Arthur was by her side. "Do you care for these?" he asked, leaning with her over a large azalea. "I don't know anything of flowers myself, and am not used to having plants about my room. I sent out for these to-day."

"Because *we* were coming?"

"Yes."

"They are very well," she said a little doubtingly.

"You have been used to prettier flowers, perhaps?"

"O yes! In our convent garden ——"

"Tell me of your convent garden. Describe it—will you?" he asked eagerly.

"May I?" And raising her eyes to his, she read there such a look of listening earnestness as impelled her to go on. "I love to think of it even now," she said in a low tone, that thrilled with suppressed feeling. "The thought is like a prayer to me. Do you know those tall, white lilies that bloom on a stem so straight as if they would put out flowers to reach to heaven, but all at once stop short and bend their pure white faces as though too humble to look higher? You do? Ah! Then picture it! All along the moss-grown, red-brick convent wall stand rows of these, like nuns—or holy guardian-spirits, they always seemed to me. Lower down in front, a hedge of myrtle grew, and in front of that again, close to the ground, a mass of pansies—pansies of every kind and hue."

"But—the lilies would die when winter came? It would be winter even in your convent garden?"

"Yes," she answered, looking straight up into his face once more, "but before they died they had made their presence so much felt it seemed as though their shadows still were there. We scarcely missed them till the summer brought them back again." With a sudden change to a lighter tone the girl continued: "Fancy, Mr. Lee! one pensionnat brought with her a little book called 'The Language of Flowers!' Oh, how I longed to read it—and, when I did, what was my disappointment to find it all mere nonsense. The true language of flowers is a silent one; it could not be put in print."

"Language of flowers? 'Print?' My child, of what can you be talking? Surely they did not teach you frivolities at your convent?"

Mrs. de Winton had approached the speakers. So marked a tête-à-tête could scarcely be permitted to last longer.

"No, mother. No frivolities were taught us there," was Leila's answer, and during the remainder of the visit the girl observed a total silence, unless addressed by either Arthur or her mother.

When the carriage was announced, Arthur felt a restless longing to say something more to Leila, but it was an indefinite something, he knew not what. He stood bare-headed at the carriage door. Some flakes of snow were falling; the wind blew piercingly.

"How cold!" cried Mrs. de Winton, shivering ostensibly as she

essayed to draw up the window. "Do not stand there, Mr. Lee, I beg. We shall be near neighbours soon—till then, good-bye!"

The words struck him with a cold chill which the piercing wind had failed to do. "Surely I shall see you before then?"

Mrs. de Winton carelessly replied:

"I shall be very much occupied next week, but will let you know when I am ready for callers. Please tell the coachman to drive on. Good-evening, and many thanks for all your kindness."

Without another word or look, Arthur turned and re-entered the house. The change from extreme cordiality to coldness on Mrs. de Winton's part affected him keenly, but he was at no loss to guess the cause. She thought him a poor man, and believed already that he loved her daughter. And had she not averred her desire that Leila should marry rank and title? Rank and title! Empty words. *They* could not ensure happiness. Wealth, according to the code in which he had been educated, *could;* and he possessed it.

Three or four days passed after this, and Arthur saw nothing, and heard nothing of his new acquaintances. When walking to and from his office, he looked up at the house—two doors from his own—which Mrs. de Winton talked of taking, and saw no change in it; until one day he found the shutters open, ladders against the walls, and a swarm of workmen busily employed.

A week later, upholsterers' vans stood before the door, and at last the window blinds and shades were there, the door steps cleaned, the brasses polished, and he knew by the general aspect of the house that it was tenantless no longer.

When he had dined that evening a small and dainty note was brought him, perfumed, monogrammed. He opened it with an eagerness he had never known in opening a note before.

"Dear Mr. Lee,—At last the weary workpeople have departed, and it is my intention to be chez moi on Friday afternoons. On these occasions need I say it will afford me the greatest pleasure to receive your visits?

"Sincerely yours, Geraldine de Winton."

Arthur crushed the offending paper in his hand.

"I will go," he said to himself a little bitterly; "I will go, and she knows it. But surely it was not necessary to sting me by another proof that she had read my feelings?"

He rose and paced the floor with impatience. "It is not yet time to let her know my true position; when the day comes I will go to her fearlessly. Gold, gold, gold! Aye, my father was right there. It is the passport to every good the world can offer. If by pouring it at the mother's feet ——" But there he paused. "Good heavens, would I so buy the love of that pure angel?"

Three days must intervene before he made the call. Three days! Once during this drear desert of time, when passing the house,

No. 10, he lifted his eyes to one of the windows with a certain consciousness that he should see there the object of his thoughts. He was not deceived. The girl stood as he had pictured her; the white bird on her shoulder. He raised his hat, whereon she gave him a bewitching smile from lips and eyes—eyes that smiled beneath the veil of their dark curved lashes.

As all things come in course of time, so Friday afternoon came for Arthur Lee, and he was shown up into the handsomely furnished drawing-room of his fair neighbour.

He was not the only guest, however. The vicar of St. Paul's—the parish priest—with clean-shaven face, bland smile, and strictest clerical attire, was sitting and looking very much at home with the widow; while a young and good-looking girl, one of his many daughters, was laughing merrily with Leila.

"Then when may I number you among my flock?" asked the vicar, insinuatingly: continuing the conversation with Mrs. de Winton, which Arthur's entrance had interrupted. "Our sittings are supposed to be all free, but, in *your* case ——"

"Oh do not make the slightest difference on my account, Mr. Vaughan," the lady protested earnestly; "Leila and I desire to be among your most devoted, most humble followers. The dear girl is ready to be quite dévote. You will permit me to send weekly, and on all the saints' days, flowers for the church?"

"It would ill become a poor priest like me to decline so sweet a gift," replied the vicar.

Then Arthur knew that Mrs. de Winton had contributed the flowers for the decoration of the church, and that the vicar's call was made to tender thanks for them. The splendour of the flowers on the previous Sunday had been the theme of universal gossip, and Arthur believed he saw through Mrs. de Winton's ruse. "Ah," thought he, "she is beginning well. She wished to ensure a call from the most fashionable clergyman in the town. She has succeeded."

His reverie was broken in upon by Mrs. de Winton. "Have you heard from the duke, saying when he returns to the castle, Mr. Lee?"

"I had a telegram to-day. He arrives at the central station at noon to-morrow."

"And you meet him at the station?"

"Yes."

"I can imagine his surprise to hear that I have settled here. Ah, what a charming woman the dear duchess was! You knew her, Mr. Vaughan? No? —— Her health was sadly delicate. Those winters she used to spend at Nice —— days that I remember, alas, too well! The dear General ——" She broke off abruptly with a long-drawn sigh, then turned lightly to speak on some common topic of the hour. A true artist in her way, none knew better than she that a few masterly touches will sometimes produce a better effect

than the most finished picture. The vicar and his daughter shortly afterwards took their leave, as highly impressed by Mrs. de Winton's social importance and graceful courtesy of manner, as she had desired they should be.

"Mr. Lee," the lady began, sinking into a low causeuse, having first dismissed Leila, and she laid her long white fingers, sparkling with gems, impressively on his coat sleeve, "I have come to the conclusion to be quite frank with you and, in all the relations we may have hereafter, to treat you in fact as l'ami de la famille. Is this quite understood? Thank you. Then now to begin and expound my little plans. To-morrow I shall be at the station when the duke arrives. It is many years since we met; more than possible he has forgotten me. You will, however, kindly name me to him."

"Excuse me, Mrs. de Winton, but—do I understand you wish me to introduce you to the duke to-morrow, at the station?"

"That is exactly what I mean, dear Mr. Lee. It is all for dearest Leila's sake, that I am so anxious to gain a good footing in the county."

"But you spoke before as though you knew the duke. I cannot do as you request. It is impossible."

"Impossible? O, that is too absurd! Why, I could have brought a dozen letters of introduction from mutual friends. Is your duke so changed a man since I last knew him? Is he a Goth, an ogre, a something altogether outside the pale of civilised society? *Or* —," she continued, transfixing Arthur with a glittering glance—"*Or* — is this what you consider *me?*"

In vain Arthur protested that no words ever were more inapplicable to either side. The duke was a polished gentleman, not by any means averse to feminine society; but this admission only damaged his case. Step by step the ground gave way beneath his feet. The wily woman gained her point, being ignorant of the one argument he withheld—withheld because he felt that if she knew it she would despise him.

The truth was this. In all his intercourse with the duke, Arthur Lee had never once by word or deed overstepped the boundary line of their respective stations. He was the paid servant of the Duke of Wearshire, and an old-fashioned Tory, as his father was before him. He dined at the duke's table, on occasion; but he no more considered himself on an equality with the peer, than he considered his own office-boy as level with himself.

Next day Arthur Lee performed the hardest task that as yet had fallen to his lot. It warred alike against his judgment and his taste. Mrs. de Winton, exquisitely but quietly dressed, was at the station when he awaited the arrival of the duke. To all appearance her presence at the time was the result of accident, and when the train stopped and the duke stepped on to the platform, he glanced at the strikingly handsome woman standing beside him.

The glance was returned on her part by a slight start, a smile as of sudden recognition; a hand held out, then as quickly again withdrawn. The duke having shaken hands with Arthur, seeing that the lady appeared to be in the company of his agent, looked inquiringly at the latter.

"Mrs. de Winton, your grace," Arthur said: then stood stern, grave, with lips compressed, an unwilling witness to a scene which may be dismissed in a few words. The duke raised his hat, the lady murmured something about "unexpected pleasure," "met at Nice," "my dear husband, General de Winton."

The long aristocratic face of the duke wore a perplexed expression, while he listened deferentially, and in return said a few polite conventional nothings.

"Can't recall her in the least," he remarked to Arthur when the lady, with a sweeping bow, had turned away. "One meets so many good-looking English women abroad in a casual way."

But his eyes followed her; as a man's eyes—be he peer or peasant—naturally turn to follow a handsome woman, whether in England or elsewhere. It so chanced that Alice Vaughan and her sisters, being at the station at the time, had witnessed from a distance this little scene. The consequence was that before two days elapsed, the story of the incident was circulating freely through the town.

Then came the inevitable question, and remarks to be heard on every side: "Have you called on Mrs. de Winton? Charming woman; evidently moves in the best society; such an amount of 'savoir faire,' you know. Immensely rich. Who is she? Oh no need to inquire into her antecedents! *The duke* knows her well. She was a friend to the poor duchess when she was so ill abroad. The duke caused Mr. Lee to engage a house for her near his own; he manages her affairs, and is to show her every attention. Too grand for you to call upon? Oh dear no! She has the most charming manners; is *most anxious* to make acquaintances. She assured me of this herself. Not in the least proud. These real aristocrats never are, you know. Alice Vaughan says that the girl—who, by the bye, is *lovely*—is simplicity itself. Think of the advantage to our sons and daughters to be invited to the entertainments which they intend to give!"

No. 10 Ellyston Place was soon besieged by callers. The new showily-appointed landau with its three hundred guinea roans, belonging to the nouveau riche, Mrs. Shoddy, of Shopperton Villa, dashed up to the door simultaneously with the old family coach of Lady Vere de Vere, with her sickly son, poor and proud, but on the look-out for a rich bride. The clergy of all denominations came,—from the Lord Bishop of the diocese to the poorest Presbyterian preacher,—for was not the lady reputed rich and generous? The big China bowl on the massive oak hall-table was filled with cards to overflowing; and

when at last invitations were issued in Mrs. de Winton's name for a ball to be given in the assembly rooms—her own house being quite inadequate to contain the number of guests expected—the excitement in town and county grew intense.

The ball was fixed for the third week in January. Mrs. de Winton, with that certainty of success which so often seems to ensure it—in other words, audacity—addressed an invitation to the Duke of Wearshire. There was a meet of the hounds at the Castle on the day her note was timed to reach him. Mrs. de Winton drove over, was recognised by his Grace, and she and Leila were escorted by him into the Castle. The rest was easy to a woman of her resources. The Duke of Wearshire honoured Mrs. de Winton with his presence at her ball on the 27th of January. The entertainment was a brilliant success, and the lady's position in the county was established, while in the town she won golden opinions by her courtesy and affability to all and every one with whom she came in contact.

But all this time how prospered the love of Arthur Lee for the fair young girl who had so unconsciously and entirely upset his prejudices against womankind?

He saw her rarely excepting in the company of others. Mrs. de Winton threw every conceivable obstacle in the way of his meeting her alone. This, it is needless to say, instead of cooling his passion, served but to add fresh fuel to its flames. These women were so different to the women his father had condemned! Even the mother—towards whom Arthur nourished an indefinable antipathy—was evidently no fortune-hunter; if she had been she would have marked him as her prey. There was no question that he loved the girl, nay, almost worshipped her. To him she was fair and pure as were the white stately lilies in her convent garden, the thought of which was as a prayer to her. Could he ever forget those words? And to him—was *she* not an embodied prayer?

He went regularly throughout Lent—more regularly than he had ever done in his earlier life—to the services at the parish church.

He wondered sometimes as he took his seat on one side of the aisle how many men came there because their "one woman in the world" was divided from them but by that narrow aisle of stone. And then he thought "most surely the love of man for a good, pure woman is his best safeguard against the world—his surest guide to heaven."

At last the day arrived that was to decide his fate.

The blow fell suddenly from the masterhand of Mrs. de Winton; the result was what she expected and desired. Arthur had returned with the ladies after morning service on Easter Sunday. Mrs. de Winton dismissed her daughter with a look. Then she began:

"Mr. Lee, I think of breaking off all our engagements here, and leaving next week for London. My sweet girl must have the advantages of other girls in her position; she must be presented at the

next drawing-room; more especially now, when . . . . in fact I will confide in you. The time has already come that I once told you I looked forward to, but dreaded. Sir Algernon Vere de Vere has asked my sanction to his engagement with Leila. He is amiable, and the sole representative of one of the oldest and proudest county families. Leila has refused to see him since she heard of his intentions, but she is a complete child, you know, and needs guidance, poor darling. *Dear* Mr. Lee! you will, I am sure, talk to her? You will set before her the advantage of such a marriage? You will speak to her as to a dear sister of your own ——"

"This I can not do," answered Arthur firmly, compressing his lips and looking at Mrs. de Winton with steady eyes, but a face which had been growing gradually paler beneath her gaze.

"You . . . *cannot?* Why?"

"Because—I love her!"

He could not control the words. He could not recall them, nor did he wish to do so. He stood up before the lady, erect and manly; even proud that the moment had arrived for him to speak.

"You love Leila? Is it possible?"

"I thought you guessed it."

A smile of satisfaction she could not repress came to her lips with her reply. "How transparent, after all, my supposed cleverness has been! Yes, dear friend, I was indeed afraid at *one* time. . . . But ah, believe me! It was from mercenary motives solely that I strove to keep you and Leila apart. But for these, you are the man I should have chosen from all the world to be the husband of my child. As it is, I can but deplore ——"

The hot blood rushed to Arthur's face, his eyes shone.

"My secret need be no longer kept, Mrs. de Winton. I am a rich man, though I have neither rank nor title. If you will give your daughter to me, I will spend all I have upon her."

"Then why did you deceive me?"

"You chose to deceive yourself, so it appears to me, and, if you remember, you declined to hear the confession I was on the point of making to you. I will make it now, however, in figures instead of words."

And seating himself at a table Arthur took a note-book from his pocket, and in a business-like way wrote in pencil a rough statement of the money left him by his father, in the funds and elsewhere. Mrs. de Winton accepted his suit, but made sundry stipulations with regard to the mode in which she would expect her daughter to live when married, and to all but one of these Arthur quickly and readily agreed. What that was will appear hereafter. Finding him inexorable on this point, she left the room, promising to send in Leila.

Five, ten minutes elapsed before the door opening softly ad-

mitted the girl. She came in with downcast face and lips that trembled nervously. He caught her hands in his and drew her towards him.

"Leila, my darling!"

Raising her clear, truthful eyes, and trying to look at him steadily, the heavy lashes wet with unshed tears, she said:

"Mamma says . . . says you wish to marry me?"

"Oh, my darling, if you only knew how I have loved you!"

"Only I did not know. Perhaps I do not understand what love is quite yet, Mr. Lee," she answered, slowly.

"But I will teach you——." He! Arthur Lee, who all his life till now had scoffed at sentiment!

"Will you? Anything is better than ——."

"Than what?"

"Than marrying—" she broke off abruptly, blushing deeply.

"Sir Algernon?"

"Ah, then you know? I was afraid I should have been compelled—I mean persuaded ——"

"But you shall not marry him. You shall never see him again against your wish. Leila, you will be mine—my darling wife. How proud I shall be of you! I have promised your mother that I will live very differently when she gives you to me: a country house, carriages, horses, jewels. I have never cared for such things myself, but you shall have all that money can buy."

Looking up into his face and smiling the smile that from the first had bewitched him, she said: "I have heard that money can buy all things in this world excepting one."

"And that is ——?" he asked, a little anxiously.

"Love."

He had no response ready. He looked at her bewildered. Unconsciously she had touched a chord that vibrated painfully.

Recovering himself, he drew her beside him on a sofa, and began telling her how he had loved her from the very first. Then, responsive to his questioning, she spoke of her girl life, spent within the convent walls, and he heard her with the rapt reverence of a mortal listening to a voice from heaven. There are those whom love strengthens; this was a strong man made weak, and to grow weaker still beneath love's thrall.

The news of Miss de Winton's engagement to Mr. Lee spread rapidly. By many it was looked upon as a *mésalliance*, but at the same time a proof of the unworldliness of Mrs. de Winton, that she should permit her daughter to marry a man of so little social position; for money itself, they argued, to those who appeared so well endowed with this world's goods, could be no object.

The engagement became a nine days' wonder, and ended there; for, in less than as many weeks the marriage was performed with great pomp and ceremony at St. Paul's Church by Mr. Vaughan and

his assistant curates; and amid the usual formalities, rejoicings, and good wishes, the bride and bridegroom set off on their wedding tour. They were now irrevocably joined together, whether "for better" or "for worse" will be seen hereafter.

II.

Six months later found Arthur Lee a changed man. Launched into circumstances so entirely new to him, he became prodigal, reckless; bent only, as it seemed, on scattering to the winds the wealth that hitherto had lain useless. Nor was it surprising that Leila, his wife, introduced so young into a whirl of pleasure, should have been led—partly by heedlessness, but chiefly by her mother's connivance—to indulge in the wildest extravagance.

It has been mentioned that there was one requirement of Mrs. de Winton's to which Arthur refused consent. This was that he should give up the duke's agency. In all else he was prepared to run counter to his father's admonitions, but not with regard to the agency; he clung to that with a persistent obstinacy—almost amounting to superstition—because his father had desired him to do so. It was the sole remaining remnant of his old life.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee spent Christmas and the New Year at their country house, where they entertained all comers; the second week in January they returned to No. 12, Ellyston Place.

Between six and seven o'clock one evening Leila was awaiting her husband's return from his office, where he appeared to have been detained later than usual. On hearing his latch-key in the door she went into the hall to meet him. "Come in here a moment, Arthur, I wish to speak with you," she said, eagerly, after their usual loving greeting, and she led the way into the dining-room. "Mamma is in such trouble. But I have told her you will put all right."

And she looked up into his face with the honest trusting eyes that pleaded more eloquently than words. Never yet had they asked for anything in vain.

"I will do what I can."

"I knew you would, and so I told her! You see, mamma thinks a great deal about money, far more than you or I do. And she has heard to-day that she has lost almost everything. And there is the house and the furniture to pay for, and oh, I don't know what besides. But, Arthur, how glad I am that *we* have it in our power so easily to make all right! A few thousands—a *very* few—and mamma will be happy again once more."

Withdrawing his hands from her gentle grasp he sat down on the nearest chair. The lamplight shining on his face showed lines of care that had never been revealed before. "A few thousands—a *very* few!" he repeated, mechanically. Of late his eyes had been opening gradually. This was a more complete awakening.

"Arthur!"

His name spoken in a low thrilling voice, and Leila kneeling in front of him, recalled him instantly and hurriedly.

"Are you—are you—displeased with me for anything?"

"With you, my child? Oh, no!"

"Why, Arthur, you have always told me money was mere dross, only good to spend ——"

"To spend on *you*, my darling."

"But I have been too selfish hitherto, wanting everything for myself. This time I ask it for poor mamma!"

"And you shall have it," he answered, kissing her and rising, but still with a troubled face. "Did she tell you how she lost her money? Where was it placed? Not in the local bank, I know: which—you may have seen by to-day's newspapers—has failed?"

Failed and carried away thousands, not "a few" of Arthur's money! But of this he would not speak to his young wife.

"Oh, she says she gave you a statement of the sums and securities lodged with her banker in London, but she removed the greater part soon afterwards and placed it with a friend, at much higher interest, I think she said, and that friend ——"

"Of course! The old story. But your mother was the last woman I should have suspected of such folly. If she has done as she says, she is no wiser than her fellows. Her *friend* is not a fool, but worse."

"Yes, yes. But Arthur, the harm is done now; and mother is so wretched! She says she feels it so that she cannot bear to speak of it to you. Come, darling husband," and forcing him back into his chair, she knelt down once more before him, putting up her sweet lips to his. "Arthur, all you have to do is to write some figures in a little book you carry in your pocket, sign your name, tear out the leaf, and give it me. I give it with a kiss to mamma, and she is happy once again, and for evermore! You will do this for my sake, Arthur?"

She looked so truthful, so loveable and radiant as she spoke, clasping her pretty white hands together in playful supplication—what could he do but yield? "You love me Leila—now?" he asked, feverishly.

"Love you? Oh, Arthur!" and throwing her arms round his neck and laying her head upon his shoulder, she looked into his eyes the answer.

At last! Could he believe that he had bought her love at last? Heaven knew he had paid dearly enough to win it. But morbid doubts were haunting him. The echo of Leila's own words still sounded in his ears, "Money can buy all things excepting one, and that is love." No matter, that look of hers for the moment was irresistible; he took from his pocket, with a half sad smile, the little book in question.

"Yes, that is the talisman," she said, kissing the hand that held it,

"and here are pen and ink. Now let me see you write those magic figures that are to make poor mamma smile again. There must be four—but what shall be the first? I am afraid '1' will scarcely be enough. Perhaps '2'; but ——"

Arthur hesitated as his pen touched the paper. He made the figure '3' in conformity with what he believed to be her wish. With a happy laugh she held her hand out for the cheque.

"No, my darling. I wish to be the bearer of this myself. Is your mother in the drawing-room? Then I will go alone to her."

Mrs. de Winton remained to dine after the interview. No trace of trouble was visible on her countenance; on the contrary, she looked radiant. An understanding had been come to between Arthur and his mother-in-law, which at least afforded considerable satisfaction to the latter. During dinner, with just a sufficient show of emotion, she announced her intention of leaving her dear children in a few days' time to resume once more her roving life in foreign lands.

In fact, she had accepted Arthur's offer of settling her affairs—in consideration that she should in future reside abroad—with the same gracious equanimity with which she had accepted his cheque for £3,000.

"I am glad to have been able to help you now, for Leila's sake," Arthur had remarked, gravely. "Another time ——"

"There shall not be 'another time,'" she answered, with a bow and smile, which told him that the subject was dismissed.

Soon, a still greater change was observable in Arthur Lee. He looked ill and harrassed, both in mind and body. "Too many dinner parties; too much port wine," said the doctor whom Leila insisted on consulting; and he prescribed plainer diet and earlier hours. But when he drove off in his brougham, he shook his head. "Don't like the man's look," he muttered to himself, "something worse than port wine and dinner parties is at the bottom of it." But not being a friend of either husband or wife, he went his way, and straightway forgot the case of Mr. Lee.

Arthur Lee had not many friends. True, since his marriage—now nearly a year ago—he had entertained largely both in town and country, but could he reckon half-a-dozen, out of all the hundreds who visited him, as friends? No, he knew it, and the knowledge saddened him. He was tired to death of the shallow, empty life he was leading. Leila was all the world to him. He had squandered his fortune wildly, recklessly, because he counted it as nothing in comparison with her love; but—had he won it even yet? In the failure of the District Bank he had lost nearly half what his father left him. The sum total of the Christmas bills appalled him. Then there were Mrs. de Winton's debts. Ignorant as a child of the extravagance of such women—even of what they would call their bare necessities—he was, however, stricken at the amount he had pledged himself to pay. These matters all unhinged him.

One morning—it was early in March, and about a month after the departure of Mrs. de Winton—he seemed more than usually gloomy and reserved. In vain Leila, with light cheerful talk, strove to rouse him from his apathy. When he was leaving for his office, she ran to him in the hall, the white bird on her shoulder. "Love me, Too-too! Kiss me, Too-too!" she sang to the old refrain—so long forgotten now—and her voice trembled, her pretty lips twitched when, with scarce a kiss in answer to her appeal, her husband turned away sighing. "A child, pleased with a toy!" he thought.

On entering his office, the first thing he did was to unlock his desk and open it. As he did so his eyes fell on a letter lying near. When he had read it, the hot blood mounted to his face and receded, leaving him more pallid than before. This letter was nothing more or less than a formal, summary request that, as soon as convenient, he should send in a statement of the Duke of Wearshire's affairs to the duke's lawyer, Mr. Hall.

Now the duke had been on the Continent since November; and a few, very few, communications had passed between him and his agent during that time. This intimation fell as a thunder-stroke on Arthur; for some moments he was unable to realise it.

Calling to one of the clerks who sat in the outer office on no account to admit anyone until his return, he hastened out to see the lawyer. That gentleman was cold in manner, reticent, distantly polite; and Arthur said, with intense bitterness: "If I thought there was an agent ready to take my place, I would ask you to give the affairs into his hands at once."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Hall, "there is no need for such precipitancy on your part. You observed the wording of the letter?"

"It is in accordance with that, that I desire to act. My accounts are ready at any moment to undergo the strictest scrutiny. My books shall be sent here. A large sum of money is lying at my office in notes and gold, received yesterday from the C. estate, too late to bank that day. Within an hour I will place that money in your hands, together with my formal acceptance of this—dismissal."

"But, my dear Mr. Lee ——"

"There is nothing more to be said."

"Excuse me, Mr. Lee, there *is*. In the event of your desiring an explanation, I was empowered to give you one. On my own responsibility I will give it, although it has not been asked, assuring you at the same time that it is with the greatest pain the Duke has taken this course. Rumours that you were living—let us say—rather extravagantly, reached his Grace some time since; these rumours alone would have been deemed reasons sufficient for most landowners to place the conduct of their affairs in other hands. For your father's sake the Duke hesitated so to act. However, a circumstance came to his knowledge which decided him. The circumstance was this. He is staying at Nice. Three nights ago he went to Monte Carlo,

and there, seated at the gaming-table, he recognised Mrs. de Winton. On inquiry he learned that she had been a well-known habituée of the rooms for years.——I see I surprise and shock you, Mr. Lee, but the Duke thought it well that you should learn the result of his investigations. Mrs. de Winton was simply the daughter of a croupier in Paris; but she managed to captivate and beguile a certain General de Winton into making her his wife. The General had an only child, a daughter, by a previous marriage. Too young to remember her own mother, she was taught to regard Mrs. de Winton in that light. On her husband's death, which occurred within a year of his marriage, Mrs. de Winton resumed in a manner her old life, first, however, placing the child, whom she looked on as an incumbrance, in a convent near Paris. Many years passed, during which she scarcely ever saw her step-daughter; but, when Miss de Winton was seventeen years old, she presented herself at the convent for the purpose of removing the young boarder. The Mother-Superior of course believed she was relinquishing her pupil into her mother's care. Mrs. de Winton brought her step daughter to England, and to this town. That is all that I have to tell you."

"Thank you," replied Arthur. "I will bring the money."

In the meantime this is what took place in Mr. Lee's office.

Scarcely had he left it when Leila ran lightly up the stairs, entered the room where a clerk was sitting writing, and with a smiling "Good morning" walked towards the private door.

"Mr. Lee is out, ma'am," said he, rising as she passed; "he gave particular orders no one was to be admitted in his absence."

"He could not mean that *I* might not go in to wait for him?"

"Those were the orders, ma'am, and I believe he locked the door."

"Why so he has!" said Leila, trying the handle. "But see, the key is in the lock! I shall go in and wait for Mr. Lee's return."

Half an hour later Leila came out again. She looked flushed—excited. In her hand was an envelope, the flap of which she was pressing down to make it adhere firmly.

"I can't wait!" she exclaimed, breathlessly, as she glanced at her watch.

"Will you leave a message, ma'am?"

"Yes. Tell Mr. Lee—no, you need not say anything at all. I will explain." So saying, she departed.

The clerk relocked the private door; then resumed his occupation. In a few minutes Mr. Lee passed through, without speaking, to his private office.

Presently he opened the door and called out: "Charles, who has been in here?"

"No one, sir. At least ——"

"My orders were that you were not to admit anyone. Who has been here?"

"It was only Mrs. Lee, sir; and indeed I didn't think any harm. She said you could not mean to keep her out——"

Arthur clutched the door handle convulsively.

"It's only a few minutes since she went away, sir. She said she couldn't wait longer. She went off quite in a hurry. She had a letter or what looked like one in her hand, and was sticking down the envelope as she went."

"What did she *say?*" inquired Mr. Lee, hoarsely.

"Nothing, sir. Only that she couldn't wait. I asked if she'd leave a message, but she said no. Can I get you anything, sir?" he asked, with a wistful look at his master's face, which wore an expression of agony that frightened him.

Arthur stared at him blankly for some seconds, then said slowly, and in a voice hardly recognisable as his:

"You can go out for an hour. Yes, yes, I am not angry with you. Go. When you return ——"

He did not finish the sentence, but stood watching the young man in a half-dazed way pick up his hat; nor did he move until the sound of his retreating footsteps died away upon the stairs.

Then Arthur drew a long breath. "An hour," he whispered. "In an hour I was to deliver up the money!"

He listlessly sat down at his desk. Before him was a slip of paper on which was written the sum of money in notes and gold that he had left there. Could he by any chance have been mistaken? The gold he knew was right; but the notes? Oh, if he had miscounted them! No. Three one hundred pound notes were missing. They were there when he went out; but now were gone.

He flung his arms upon the table, and laying his face upon them groaned aloud. Presently raising his head he looked at the time-piece on the wall. The minutes were flying fast. In an hour's time ——

He unlocked a drawer in the writing-table and took from it a small pistol which had lain there for years. He remembered his father telling him it had been loaded many years ago, in the time of the Chartist riots. He examined it carefully, critically, though his hand shook somewhat as he held it. He raised it, and pressed the muzzle against his brow. How cold it felt. He withdrew it again and looked around him. Once more he lifted the little weapon resolutely, standing up; his finger was on the trigger.

At this moment the door opened noiselessly, and Leila entered.

She saw the situation at a glance. Never in all his life would Arthur forget the expression on her lovely face. She neither uttered word nor sound, but gliding across the room to her husband, she took, unresisted, from his hand the deadly weapon.

Quite quietly she laid it on the table among the scattered papers there, then drew a chair towards him, and with gentle force made him lean back in it.

She could not speak. The silence was too awful to be broken by words. Dropping upon the floor she took her husband's hands in hers, pressing them against her heart, her lips, her eyes.

He heard the panting breath, the hurried beating of her heart; he was as one stricken blind and dumb. But he could feel; and he felt as though he were in the presence of an angel.

"Arthur! Hear my confession," whispered the soft pleading voice of Leila presently. "On my knees let me tell you what a sin I had nearly committed. This morning a letter came to me from my mother; I did not read it till after you were gone. She was in great trouble for want of money, and implored me if I loved her to let her have two or three hundred pounds. I was to make a memorandum of the numbers of the notes, register the letter, and send it off at once; but on no account to tell you that I wanted the money for her. I came to the office to ask you for it, meaning however to tell you all about it. You were out. I waited till nearly time to post my letter for the midday post, and you never came. Your desk was open—that was why, perhaps, you had ordered that no one should be admitted—there were bags of money and bank notes in it. At last, thinking only of my mother's need, and believing that had I asked you, you would have given me twice the sum, I took three notes and put them in an envelope. But before reaching the post office some instinct told me I was doing wrong. Even to help mamma I ought not to take money that was yours without your knowledge. So I came now to bring it back. Thank God! Oh, thank God I came!"

With a sob she took the envelope from her pocket, and tearing it open laid the notes beside the others on the desk. "Can I be forgiven, Arthur?"

"Forgiven? Leila, you are an angel! You have saved me."

Whereon she flung her arms about his neck. "How I love you, Arthur! If it had not been for my mother ——"

"She is *not* your mother." Then her husband told her all.

"I am glad she is not my mother," was all she said.

"And Leila, will it make you unhappy to live differently?" he asked. "To have only one house, fewer servants, no money to spend on jewellery and expensive pleasures? In fact to take care of what we have left, instead of spending it lavishly."

"Unhappy?" she echoed, "nay, Arthur! If you tell me you are poor—poor even as the poorest beggar to whom we have sometimes given alms, I shall be glad, *glad!* Aye, a thousand times happier than I have been with all our wealth, because then, at last you will *believe* that I love you—love *you*, and want nothing but your dear love for mine."

At last he was convinced. To his life's end now, he would believe she loved him!

But they were not reduced to poverty by any means True the

half of his fortune was gone; but the duke, hearing through Mr. Hall how matters stood, refused to accept Arthur's resignation of the agency, and wrote to him in the kindest manner, requesting him to continue the management of his affairs.

The following letter from Mrs. de Winton, in reply to one from Arthur Lee, must be given here. It is the sequel to my tale:

"NICE, *March*, 1880.

"DEAR SIR,—Your letter was superfluous. I had no intention of troubling you further. All that remains is to furnish you with the key to those actions on my part which you so severely condemn. I told you I met your father many years ago at Buxton. It is now time you knew the rest. I had reason to believe Mr. Lee admired me, and that he would marry me. I was in pecuniary difficulties at the time, and unable to pay the expenses of my visit. Presuming on your father's apparent regard for me, I, in this unpleasant dilemma, asked him to assist me. Not only did he refuse to do so, but he heaped on me such contumely, I fled from the hotel. Do you remember my words to you at our first interview? 'I never forget a kindness, and *never forgive an injury*.' You thought it was the former I remembered in connection with your father; but you were mistaken, as I intended you should be. On hearing of Mr. Lee's death, I sought you out, and found it easy enough to make you the instrument of my revenge, and through you I have enjoyed the inexpressible delight of spending a fair portion of that hoarded wealth which had been so cruelly and insultingly denied me in my need. Farewell. My love to dearest Leila. You have her; are you a loser after all? It seems to me at last we may cry 'quits.'

"GERALDINE DE WINTON."

When Arthur Lee read this he was alone in his office, and the paper fluttered from his hand, while his memory flew back to the dull November afternoon when Mrs. de Winton broke in upon his solitude, changing the whole after-current of his life. He imagined the air once more redolent with that faint fragrance which exhaled from her sable-trimmed velvet draperies as they swept across the floor. He recalled the feeling of repugnance, the natural instinct of aversion, which he had in vain striven to combat throughout his acquaintance with this woman, and he forgave her—forgave her from the bottom of his heart—for his gain was indeed greater than his loss.

YVONNE.

A STEAMER ROMANCE.

By the Author of "Adonais, Q.C."

I.

IT is Sunday—and the steamer is out on the open sea. A long, dark, handsome steamer it is; and it cuts a white path for itself through the sapphire waters, and leaves a shadowy, brown wavering track behind it.

Out of sight of land; ah, what freedom! Ah, what a free, deep, peaceful rest from the cares of the world; almost too deep for words. Just for this hour—or these hours—what has all the rest of the world to do with this steamer?

The strong sun shines down on it; the wide glistening heavens stretch over it; the white sea-gulls dance on the tiny waves all round about it; and it cuts its swift way straight on. It is a haven of rest, out on the open sea.

The passengers lie dotted in easy positions about the clean white deck; their hats drawn over their eyes; their eyes looking down into the depths. The lazy waves, and the black hurrying smoke, and the thumping engines—everything *speaks;* all in a pure, strange, grand language, that lifts these weary, worldly passengers out of themselves, up to a something immeasurably better and higher—if undefinable. Three of them lean over the boats; their heads down on the smooth white canvas; a fourth has cast himself full length not far from the funnel; here an old lady snores peacefully; over there, again, another plies her knitting-pins.

Upon the deck two figures only are in motion. They are pacing, pacing, as if there were no such thing as rest in all the world. The one is a man, and the other a woman; they meet and re-meet again and again; they do not take their eyes from the deck; neither appears to notice the other; it seems as if they were to pace on there for ever. The sun grows always hotter.

The man was a tall, brown-faced man of soldierly bearing, handsome-featured, pleasant-eyed. He walked with a sharp, regular tread, announcing that there was strength somewhere in his character. The girl was little and graceful, small-faced, lustrous-eyed. She wore a plain dress, ruby-tinted, that must have dated before the age of short, ungraceful walking-skirts, for it swept the deck after her two or three inches or more. From her walk one could tell nothing of her character—except that she was graceful. The man might have been twenty-nine or thirty years of age, certainly not more; he was assuredly a gentleman: the girl might have numbered eighteen or nineteen summers, but she hardly looked as if she numbered so

many; there was no mistaking that she was a lady. They paced on alone.

Suddenly something of an amusing nature seemed to have found its way into the man's thoughts, for an unmistakable smile crept into and played over his features. About the same time the girl's face softened, then broke into sunshine. She was opposite the gangway; he had to come to the wheel; they turned and raised their eyes—still smiling. The eyes met: keen, deep-set blue eyes, his; dreamy, large-pupilled dark eyes, hers, meeting in a strange fascination. There was an expression of intense amusement about the corners of his mouth, and a dark flush on his face; the girl, blushing painfully, was preternaturally grave. As the man passed, he glanced at the girl quickly and critically; then relapsed into gravity. Four, or five times more they passed each other; then the girl left the deck. The man half turned to look after her, and paced on as before.

Suddenly, something lying on the white wood, a little square insignificant looking something, caught the man's eye. He picked it up, and looked at it—and smiled. At the same moment the girl re-appeared on deck, carrying a bundle of magazines and a cloak. She settled herself on a distant seat, never so much as turning her head towards him. He waited until she was settled, then changed the direction of his walk sharply, and stood before her. She raised her small face, a world of cold surprise in its expression. He lifted his hat slightly, and smiled.

"Excuse me," he said, "is this yours?"

Astonishment, mingled with pleasure, flashed out of her eyes. "Oh—yes! Thank you so much. I must have dropped it."

He laughed, handing it to her; looking at her with interest; eyeing her over with the well-bred air permitted to a man of the world.

"Yes, you dropped it. I am glad I noticed it. Photographs are such—such disagreeable things to drop, do not you think so?"

He was engaged on a rapid mental category, something after this fashion: "Well-cut little face; prettier even than I thought. Nice mouth; lovely eyes; wonderfully sweet expression and ——"

She interrupted his thoughts abruptly, looking up at him very quietly. "Disagreeable! In what way do you mean?"

He started; and shot a searching glance at her, and laughed rather confusedly. "Well—ah—don't you think so? I've had such awkward things happen to me in that way. I remember once—it was on a boat, too—I dropped a photograph, just as you dropped this; and in the middle of dinner the steward brought it back to me upon a plate.—Tremendously awkward, you know."

The beautiful dark eyes turned upon him, clouded in something like doubt, and finally drooped back upon the photograph.

"I thank you very much," she repeated quietly. "I don't know how vexed I should have been to lose my brother's likeness."

He half laughed, looking down at the glistening card. "It was

just such another I dropped myself. You would have had my sincere sympathy, I'm sure ——"

She glanced quickly at him, smiling very kindly. "It was your brother's photograph that you lost too, then. Yes, I dare say I might have felt awkward if you had brought this to me when I was at dinner."

He leaned a little upon the arm of the seat, and smiled at her. He had a remarkably firm straight-cut chin and mouth; he looked well when he smiled, and he probably knew that he did.

"I'm sure I should never have risked anything so unpardonable."

She looked at him a little wonderingly; and dropped her eyes again.

"Are you—are you very fond of your brother?" she asked.

He laughed outright then, showing all his straight, white teeth as he did so. There certainly was a singular charm about the face. "I should have been—if I had had one; but I'm afraid you misunderstood me just now—because, you see—I never had a brother."

She coloured up to the roots of her hair, and started. "Oh!" she said, stiffly. "I beg your pardon! I understood ——"

"Yes—I know you did. Well, for the life of me I can't remember whose photo that was. It was a lady's, I know; I think it must have been my sister's. I *have* a married sister about, somewhere."

The girl settled herself more comfortably upon the narrow seat, and ostentatiously turned over a page of her book. A flash of mischief mingled with the amusement in his deep-set eyes. He hesitated a minute, and straightening himself, changed his tone.

"The next land we sight will be Flamborough Head; the last we sighted was off the east coast of Scotland somewhere. Nice boats these Dunraven boats."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Don't you think they are nice?"

"What are?"

"Why—the boats!"

She reddened again, turning over another leaf as she had turned the last one. "I don't quite understand you."

"Which is to say—pardon me for the liberal translation—that you would prefer to read."

"Thank you; I should like to read, if you don't mind," she retorted, blushing furiously.

He bowed low, and left her without a word, his mouth curling down in amusement—or pique—or something; and in another moment was pacing rapidly backwards and forwards as before.

The steamer hurries on; eight-bells rings out, and the old lady at the top of the cabin stairs bestirs herself, and disappears down the companion ladder. The captain leaves the bridge, and comes along to the main-deck, exchanging a word here and there with this or that passenger as he goes by. He joins the brown-faced man of soldierly

appearance; they pace the deck together, in the full glare of the sunshine, talking and laughing a little from time to time. A steward's boy trips swiftly about in his white apron. A low mowing and bleating come from the imprisoned cows and sheep in the lower deck.

Suddenly there rises into view a faint misty outline far away, to the eastward; the outline becomes more defined; the waves sparkle, and the steamer still hurries on, its brass and its shining wood glancing in the sun. Gradually the great yellow cliffs and the green grass, and the lonely light-house, stand out distinct and bright against a summer sky. The passengers rouse themselves, and get their field-glasses; the girl in the ruby dress shuts her book and goes over to the side of the vessel; only the brown-faced man paces on alone.

All at once there comes the sharp blowing of a steamer's whistle; *this* steamer answers back as sharply. With the rapidity of lightning, every cook, every steward, every man, woman, and child is on the deck. Another moment, and a long, dark vessel, identical in form with this, meets this one only at a few yards' distance. The little crowd of figures assembled on that deck wave and halloa wildly; the little crowd on this deck wave and halloa wildly also. Only a moment, and it is vanishing; the two crowds gaze at each other's receding figures, and the two crowds disappear. This little interchange of sympathy takes place twice in the seven days while the summer changes into winter, and the winter changes into summer, the crowds augmenting or thinning according to the season.

After all, it is just these little interchanges which bring a sweetness and a merriment into life.

The girl in the ruby dress stands by the wheel, and watches the receding vessel. Then she turns sharp round and runs fair against the brown-faced soldier. He steps back and bows without speaking; her dark eyes meet his; she hesitates, and smiles.

"Oh!—Is that Flamborough Head?"

"Yes. It looks very calm and Sunday-like, does it not? Would you like a glass?"

"No, thank you. Oh! and—I—I am very much obliged to you for bringing me back that photograph."

He bowed very gravely again. "Pray don't mention it; there is nothing to be obliged about. And now, can I do anything else for you—besides photographs?—Or may I resume my walk?"

Her face flushed crimson; tears of offended pride collected, and filled the eloquent eyes. He waited his answer for a moment; and getting none, bowed and set off away down the deck again. She turned aside, biting her lips in bitter mortification. Even as she turned, a low laugh broke out behind her. She wheeled round angrily, her eyes sparkling in the sunshine.

He put one arm on the railing, and smiled. "You gave me my congé so sternly a little while ago," he said, laughing, "that I thought I would just do as I had been done by. Nay," he added,

more gravely, "don't let us quarrel; one ought not, you know—upon a Sunday."

"I think you are very rude," she cried out, her cheeks flaming.

"I did not intend it for rudeness," he pleaded. "You are not angry with me? You are not going to quarrel with me?"

The anger died out of her small face, as suddenly as it had flashed into it; she was evidently a creature of emotion. "Why—I hardly know you," she answered, laughing, and looking at him.

A strange light came into his eyes as he watched her. He drooped them for a moment, then stuck one hand into each of his jacket pockets, and faced her abruptly.

"Do you believe in such a thing as fascination?"

The dark smoke of the funnel flitted about them; the yellow cliffs were already receding in the distance. The colour rose up into her delicately chiselled little face again, but she laughed quietly.

"Unhappily—I think you need hardly ask me."

He laughed himself, still with the same puzzled look about his eyes.

"Yes, we are most certainly a case in point; there is no doubt about it. But I meant even more than such a fascination as—as that. I don't know if fascination is the proper word for what I mean. Did you ever feel drawn to a person—irresistibly, unaccountably interested in them, haunted by them from the first moment they come across your path?—Mind, I am not speaking of love at first sight; I believe in that too; I believe there is no greater truth than that such a thing does exist. I am a man who has seen a good deal of life; and I am not by any means a romantic man. But I believe, as surely as I am standing here speaking to you, that there are people who give their very hearts and souls away to each other in a glance; and go through life adoring one another—all at a distance—up to old age; or maybe up to the end. Fate decrees that they should never know one another; fate decrees that they should live and die separately; and they do so—I am speaking of people—equals in class, you understand me—where the petty barriers of society are too frigid to be lightly broken; people who see each other day by day, and yet whom fate, or chance, or what you will, denies what the world calls an introduction. It makes one very bitter to think of it—and I am certain it is true."

She looked at him thoughtfully. "You speak as if—you had felt it."

He brought his eyes back from dreamland with a quick flash. "*I*—if you knew me better, I don't think you would suggest such a thing. But you know it was not love at first sight that I wanted to ask you about; it was the other thing—that strange interest with which one person sometimes inspires another. Well, I will tell you this: it is a very plain and a very blunt thing to tell you, but you must excuse me: I—feel it now."

She simply stared at him; her little flushed face looking into the sunburnt determination of his in sheer bewilderment, the curd-

ling waters rushing and seething around the hull of the vessel. After an instant's pause, he went on hurriedly.

"Did it ever strike you to wonder whether *you* haunted anybody in that way? somebody you met long ago in a crowd; or somebody who trod on your dress at a flower-show; or somebody, maybe, who merely saw you pass by. I assure you that last is not so unlikely. Is it not strange to think of these unknown chords of sympathy betwixt you and these unknown somebodies. And I will tell you another way by which sympathy unites people—by dreams. Just suppose, now, that all the people who ever dreamt of you were to come in a body to declare themselves to you, what a ridiculously incongruous, and what an amusing body it would be! You walk up a street, and somebody meets you; a somebody who has met you indifferently a hundred times before, but just to-day you notice that he looks at you intently, and turns away with an expression of suppressed amusement, and you wonder why. Take my word for it, he dreamt last night that you and he were eating baked potatoes, with lawn-tennis rackets for spoons, at the top of Lochnagar; or —or something equally ridiculous."

She stopped him, laughing in spite of herself. "Excuse me—but did you dream that about me last night, since you say you feel it?"

He laughed himself, looking down at her. "No—ours is of the fascination order; and I do think we ought to be immortalised by our suffering fellow-creatures, because we have done what I don't suppose any of them ever did before. We have felt it, and we have talked it out together in a common-sense way. Oh, but I beg your pardon; all this time I have been using the plural number where I ought to have kept to the singular."

She lifted her eyes to him, smiling and colouring very deeply.

The steamer hurried on; the drowsy passengers bestirred themselves here and there: Flamborough Head was fading into distance; the sister steamer stood out a black spot on the horizon. And only an hour had passed since eight-bells rang. An hour; only a short hour; and a glance had done it all!

Ah me!—let us pray for our eyes! We have need of it.

The hours went by. The steamer beat, and thumped, and hurried on; past this county, past that county—a glimpse of land here and there—then sea, sea. Faint, dreamily-tolling bells, and many vessels. Where are we? Coming to the Roads. A long, low line of busily twinkling lights, under a grey night sky. What is this, then? This is Yarmouth. A pitching, and tossing, and heaving. What, a storm at last? No, no; only the Nore; crossing the Nore—that is all. Night, sable night—and sleep. But the engines are little given to sleeping. If you waken in the small hours and hear them thumping and thundering—for they never seem to work so hard as by night —and raise your head a little, wondering sleepily: "Where can we be? I wish I knew just where we are," they will answer back to you at

once: "Never mind; leave it to us; you'll see where you are in the morning." So you turn on your pillow, and fall fast asleep again.

And in the morning you will wake up with a start to find a strong hot sun glaring in at you, through your little round cabin window; and a sound of flopping water; and the engines beating in a tired, peaceful sort of way. You spring up and strain your eyes out at the green banks, and trees, and little houses, and big houses, and fishing-boats, and sailing boats, and mighty vessels. "The Thames!" you cry. And you will dress and rush upstairs; and gaze.

That was what the little delicate-faced girl who had paced the main deck did; exactly that. The man who had paced it with her was there too, gazing also; only he had been there all night.

She has leaned her arms on the bulwarks, and watches the scene. The houses thicken, and the water loses its freshness. They have spoken of the green banks, and the river, and the big old veteran powder-ships, and the landing-stage to come; all in a friendly, kindly, half-indifferent way. And now suddenly, as the steamer flits on, and a great, white, German vessel casts its shadow upon them; as good-luck, or ill-luck, or some luck will have it, *their eyes meet*. Not casually; not indifferently; a long, searching, solving, reading look. After a minute he turned away to this side; and she to that side; but it seemed as if this look had in one moment severed the past from the future. And he bent his head low down, and looked again into them.

"Yvonne."

She started, and blushed; and finally stammered in answer:

"How did you know that my name was—Yvonne?"

"Because I saw it on the photograph. 'To dear Yvonne.' Yvonne—Yvonne—never mind your name just now. I have something very much more important to speak to you about. Listen to me. I cannot let you pass away out of my sight without at least an attempt to fight against it. I have thought of it all night. I have thought that it would be sheer madness; yet I must speak to you. You know nothing about me; and I know nothing about you, except this—and I swear to you that I don't care a jot to know anything more—that you are Yvonne. Dear Yvonne, sweet Yvonne! I think you like me; I saw it in your eyes that you liked me. As for loving, I am not speaking about loving; yet, oh heaven, could you read my heart, Yvonne! I don't know how to beat about the bush when I am in earnest; I only know that I wish with all my heart and soul and strength that you would promise me this: that if you are a free woman in two years hence, you will let me try to make you love me."

The sunshine flashed and played; and the great tears stood in her eyes. She raised them to him very earnestly.

"I believe in you," she said quietly. "I believe you mean what you say. And I—yes, I do like you. But think of the difficulties. In two years you do not know where you may be. And in two years you will have forgotten me. Ah, yes, you think just now

that it will not be so; but it will; it could hardly be otherwise."

"Yvonne,"—he stopped her with a quick movement, his brows knitted together passionately—"do you think I don't know myself? My past life has not exactly been that of a saint, but at least I cannot reproach myself with inconstancy. Let it be longer than two years, if you will; and you will see whether I can forget so easily. Do you remember what you told me about yourself—and I think it was the only thing you did tell me—that it would be two years upon the next twenty-fifth of December until you started for home? You said you had made the calculation, and that the twenty-fifth fell upon a Saturday, and that, come weal or come woe, if you were in life you would be starting by the steamer upon that day. I do not know why you should be so long away from home; nay, do not tell me; I do not wish to know. I will leave you alone during these two years. You are free; free to do what you like; to marry whom you wish; only, child, for heaven's sake, if you are still free at the end of them, be upon the steamer. Yvonne, I will be there."

There came a long pause. The passengers moved to and fro about the steamer. A gaily-built little yacht danced past them; and the captain—up on the bridge—took off his hat and waved it in greeting to somebody on board. Very slowly she raised her soft, dark eyes, still shining with tears, and looked at him. "I promise," she said; "and yet—yet I do not even know to whom I am promising."

He put out his brown hand, and closed it over hers, just for an instant. "Say 'I promise, Paul,'" he said. "It is not a pretty name, but it is a short one; you will not forget it; and it is mine. Repeat it after me, Yvonne—'I promise, Paul.'"

She repeated it after him as he told her. He dropped her hand, and they stood straight upright again and talked of other things. And the steamer sped on its way.

II.

A LONG, low, red-brick manor-house; a sweeping, undulating park before it; a forest of rustling pine-trees stretching away out behind it; and a strong hot summer's sun, blazing down upon it.

At an open window, round which the luscious purple creeper is twining, and the dainty hammer-birds are twittering, a little, delicate-looking woman sits with her hands crossed, looking out at the waving tree-tops. Her large eyes seem to have caught some of the sun's brilliancy, for they sparkle and glance delightedly, her thoughts some of its brightness, for her small pale face is the very picture of dreamy content.

"A year to-day," she murmurs to herself. "Oh, and it was just a day like this, too: the sun was shining, and the soft wind blowing. Paul what? Paul who? I did not ask; I did not care to know.

Oh, Paul, Paul; such a pretty name is Paul! He said it was not pretty, but it is; I never knew a prettier name than Paul. Sometimes it seems as if there was no other name in all the world than Paul—because Paul is so enwrapped with everything. A year! and in another year, it will be almost time. Oh, Paul! Will it be fine and frosty; or will the wind whistle, and the waves roll? Oh, Paul!"

The creeper rustles, and the sun shines; and still the little, delicate-faced girl dreams on.

Suddenly a grave-looking elderly lady comes quietly in, and lays her hand upon the girl's shoulder. "Dreaming," she says. And as the small face flushes consciously, she passes her hand over it gently, and smiles. "Ah, I see; well, I am glad there is—somebody, because I am the bearer of bad tidings to-day; bad both for you and for me. Yvonne Ogilvie, there is a change coming into both our lives, child. I am going away from this; and you—you ——"

Yvonne turned round from the window, and started in utter bewilderment. "Going away, Miss Marriot!" she repeated breathlessly. "Oh, Miss Marriot, what *can* you mean by going away?"

The lady sat down upon a low chair opposite to her. "How long is it since you came here as governess to my dead brother's child, Yvonne? Almost a year, is it not?"

"A year to-day," she answered quickly, half smiling.

"A year to-day!" repeated Miss Marriot. "So long as that! Well, Yvonne, I think you have been happy with us. I have looked upon you as I might have looked upon a daughter; and as for little Eleanor, you know that you are dearer to her than even I am. If during all this time I have confided in you next to nothing of my own, or of that child's affairs, it is because I am little given to confidences. Sit down there again, and I will tell you."

Yvonne sat down as she was bidden; a vague uneasiness in her expression. The lady took the girl's hand into hers, and spoke:

"My brother was not like me," she began. "He was very sensitive, for one thing; and he was of a quiet, retiring disposition—painfully shy. How he ever came to marry the woman he did was a mystery to me, save that she was beautiful; but, at any rate, there is no mystery about this—that she did her best to break his heart. He had been married just a little less than four years when the news came to me that, one dark night, while his yacht was off the coast of Denmark, he had fallen overboard and was drowned. His wife, with a party of her friends, was on board at the time. *I knew what that meant;* and I thought my thoughts; and I wept over my brother. Remember, what I am saying is in strict confidence betwixt you and me; I kept my thoughts to myself; and there was never a breath of slander as to the manner of my poor brother's death. I did not see his wife for more than a year afterwards. I did not see her until the day that she came to my home and sat before me; and putting all the boldness out of her fair face—as she well knew how—begged and

implored me to come and take up my abode here, 'for darling little Eleanor's sake;' while she travelled abroad for her health. Her health! It made me laugh then, even as the very thought of it does now; a stronger bit of marble never was chiselled. Yvonne, as she sat before me that autumn afternoon I told her—*that I knew;* knew how my brother came by his death. It made me shudder to see the abject terror and shame that came into her face, but my heart softened to her just a little when she wept as she did; and I came. Three years have passed away since then, and to-day, for the first time, she again let me hear from her. And what do you think is her news now, Yvonne?"

"What?"

"This: that she has married again."

"Married again!"

"Yes. She writes to me from London—just a few words. She says that she was married in Germany about a month ago; that she, and her husband and some friends—oh, Yvonne, I wonder has the woman no memory—that they are coming on here to-morrow: which, of course, means to-day. She tells me nothing about her husband, not even his name: only she signs herself, Eleanor Joscellyn. That is all, positively all, that I know. I am very, very sorry for him, whoever he is, poor fellow; only, of course, I cannot stay here. I shall wait to deliver up little Eleanor to her. It pains me to the heart to leave the child; but what can I do? As for you, what will you do? Were I speaking only for Eleanor's sake, I would say to you—stay; but for your own sake, my dear Yvonne, I must tell you, you had better, far better go away."

The girl looked round at the low-roofed, heavy-raftered room, dangling her small white hand out of the window, fingering the purple creeper nervously.

"Would she be unkind to me, Miss Marriot?"

"Unkind to you, child? Well, that depends upon what you mean by the word. She will smile on you, and cajole you, and introduce you to all her friends, just because you have a pretty face, Yvonne, and she likes to amuse her friends. All the same, if you were my daughter, you should not stay an hour in her house. And yet—you are so good, Yvonne."

Yvonne shot a swift, direct look out of her sweet dark eyes into the kindly face studying her. "I am not good, dear Miss Marriot; but you see, it is only for a year."

"Why only for a year? Ah, I understand—this somebody." And she added, laughing and taking her hand: "Oh, Yvonne—yes, child, I think you may stay. When you can blush like that, and when there is this somebody—I think you may stay."

And as the forest whispered, and the blue smoke of the gnarled old red chimneys went wafting away up into the air, Yvonne smiled; she thought of the wide ocean, the long dark steamers, the thumping

engines; of keen deep-set blue eyes, and a sunburnt face. After all, what was this woman, or her husband, or her friends to Yvonne? What was anything or everything; or rather what and who *was* everything? Paul.

Darkness has fallen on the manor-house, and the wind rustles in the trees around it. Lights shine out from the many windows, and voices laugh and talk in the long brilliant drawing-room, and go sounding away over the quiet park, for the night is hot, and the windows are open. Gay, showy music mingles with the voices from time to time, seeming to announce, just as they do, the style of people to be expected beyond the fluttering muslin curtains. The dogs bark in the distant kennels, and the little birds swing to and fro up on the branches. At the back of the house again all is quietness; a low window, from where one can listen to the whispering of the pine-trees, stands open. Down upon the sill a little fragile-looking woman has laid her head; she is sobbing, sobbing, sobbing—as only a woman in trouble, and the dark night wind, can sob. She wears an evening dress of some gauzy material; and the light of the flickering candle burns dangerously near; but she cares nothing for it, turning herself to this side and to that—and sobbing, sobbing. All of a sudden the door opens and shuts again hastily, and a man seizes both her hands in his, bending to her passionately.

"Yvonne—oh, Yvonne, Yvonne!"

She pulls them away with an effort, and turns her back to him, flushing up to the roots of her hair, and biting her lips angrily.

"Captain Joscellyn, how dare you call me by that name?"

He pushed the candle quickly aside, and took her hands into his again before she could prevent him, his face as dark as the night, his blue eyes flaming.

"Yvonne—for heaven's sake let us have none of this make-believe nonsense. I will not do or say anything which either of us might regret; but you *shall* hear what I have to tell you. I cannot rest until I do it. I shall never trouble you about it again—you may be sure of that, Yvonne. When I said good-bye to you upon the steamer that day, there was no man in all the wide earth more free than I, though I could not then conveniently marry, and never man meant words more earnestly than I did—those words I spoke to you. You went one way, and I went another; but many and many a time I thought that I could not wait—that I must trace you; for it seemed such madness to cast away two happy years out of our short life times. About two months ago I wandered away to Germany, still thinking of you; night and day thinking only of you. Would you like me to swear it, Yvonne? Well, I was passing through Dresden—and it was a chance that I did pass through Dresden at all, and I had just turned into the booking-office at the railway station there, when an old school friend of mine tapped me on the shoulder. You know how

things happen : a few hours later I was whirling around a ball-room with—my wife for a partner ; only, of course, she was not my wife then." The girl turned from him. "Nay, you need not be afraid, Yvonne—I am not going to say anything that I ought not to say. And yet—oh, Yvonne, I must explain what I have to explain ; how can I, unless I tell you all ! See, I can say this : I told you my past life had not been exactly that of a saint's—well, upon that very first night I lost my head ; I never lost my heart, never, never. My wife knows that as well as I know it ; otherwise I should not repeat it to you, but the head is more dangerous to lose than the heart sometimes. And so, the days passed on, and we were married. I do not want to excuse myself, or to attempt to justify myself ; I only want to ask you to forgive me. After to-night you shall be Miss Ogilvie, and I Captain Joscellyn, but, just this once : life is so short you know, and it will be something for me to carry through it : just this once, Yvonne, let me hear you say 'Paul, I forgive you.'"

His eyes were wet with tears ; his voice shook with emotion.

She looked at him very gravely and quietly. "I cannot say quite that," she answered firmly ; "but I can say, Captain Joscellyn, I forgive you ; if, indeed, there is anything to forgive. And after to-night—it is all arranged—I am going away."

He straightened himself, and crossed his arms in silence, the night wind ruffling his hair, and playing wildly with the flaming candle. "That means," he began huskily at last, "that you do not trust me when I promise I will never again trouble you. Very well, Yvonne, it is no wonder. That is all, of course, that I can say."

She stood before him white as death. "Captain Joscellyn," she said, "that day upon the steamer you left me free, and of course you were free yourself ; besides which, the whole thing was only a dream. You have nothing to reproach yourself with, so far as I am concerned. It is not on account of this that I am going away."

He stood for one moment irresolute, then suddenly held out his hand to her without a word. "Good-bye, Yvonne."

She put her own into it quietly. "Good-bye."

As if by mutual consent, they raised their faces, and looked steadily at one another. Keen, deep-set, blue eyes ; grave, large pupilled, dark eyes ; in both—despair. All of a sudden, a great cry burst from her ; down upon the table she laid her head, sobbing madly, "Paul, Paul—why did you do it ?" And almost in the same breath, "Paul, I forgive you."

With a bound, she was out of the room, and away. He made a rapid stride, as if to follow her ; then, stopping abruptly, he stood sighing, and passing his hand over his brow as if to think. Suddenly, with one passionate movement, he locked himself into the room, and with another, pitched the lighted candle far away, out amongst the dewy grass below, leaving himself alone in the impenetrable darkness.

That was all man ever knew of the struggle.

III.

A STORM on the open sea, and the steamer is out in it.

The great waves are flying from side to side, roaring, seething, running, rushing; throwing up pillars of swirling whiteness into the air. Darting, plunging, turning in one instant from brown to purple, from dingy yellow to emerald green; everywhere force, everywhere power; miles and miles of a mad, dancing, scrambling movement; hurrying lights and shadows; the wind shrieking; the black clouds tearing. At the far away shore, where the mighty waves bomb against the rocks, and the fishermen cluster together, holding on their hats and shaking their heads, even there it is nothing to this, upon the open sea.

The steamer is out in it. It staggers and plunges; it stands vibrating; darts wildly on; then stands again; the engines thundering madly; the black smoke gasping. A long, lithe looking steamer it is; but will it stand this, out on the open sea?

Down in the long crimson-carpeted saloon a little woman sits with her head bent over the table, an open book before her, her large eyes staring into vacancy. The wind howls and the vessel rocks, but she never even heeds it, only clasping the side of the table mechanically to keep herself from falling—and she is dreaming. No one could tell what is the nature of these dreams, her face is so still and changeless; except, perhaps, that she is dreaming not so much of some*thing* as of some*one*; and that as no smiles come to relieve the fixed look of eyes and brow, they can hardly be very brilliant in their happiness. It is a strange thing to be day-dreaming with only a thin plank betwixt her and eternity, and with eternity, so to speak, announcing itself in the voice of every wave crashing against the vessel.

One of the side cabin-doors opens softly. Ah, could she but see; could she only but see! but she goes on dreaming, all unconscious. A man—a brown-faced, handsome-featured man, stands irresolute, and then comes slowly forward; his brows knit, his lips quivering. Oh, Yvonne, Yvonne, turn and look at the man. She will not look; she only gazes fixedly at the swinging lamp above her head; until all at once her name is called in a tone in which it was surely never called before. She turns her head rapidly, and gasps, her face as white as death:

"Paul!"

He holds out both his hands; she puts her own mechanically into them, still staring wildly; and then with a fierce movement, snatches them away again. "What are you doing here? why are you here? They told me I was the only passenger on board." Then with a sudden burst: "Oh, Paul, Paul; is it really you!"

The ship rolls; he drops into the seat beside her, and smiles.

"Yvonne, why do you ask me what I am doing here? You know I am only keeping my promise."

A flush of anger covers her pale face, and she attempts to rise; but he pushes her gently down, and repeats his question.

"Yvonne, sweet Yvonne, why do you ask me?"

"Captain Joscellyn!"

"Nay—Paul." A thought of some strange nature seemed to strike her; for her face became deadly white and dazed again. Then all of a sudden, with a stifled cry, she laid her head on the table, and wept as if her heart would break. "Oh, Paul, I am so sorry; and yet—oh, I cannot tell whether I am glad or sorry. She is dead?"

He bent his head slowly, turning his gaze to the far end of the cabin. The storm raged wilder than ever. The dark narrow space at the end heaved up and down; the heavy red-cushioned seats around it rose and fell, like spectres in the darkness. He watched them dreamily out of his blue, burning eyes.

"Yvonne," he said, "listen to the wind."

She turned round upon him again, her features quivering. "Paul, when did she die?"

A mighty wave thundered against the shivering wood. He clasped his hands tightly over hers. "Listen to the storm, Yvonne. But it is already passing."

She pulled her hands away from him, and covered her face again.

"And to think that she is dead!"

He took hold of them once more, with a passionate movement; and spoke as though his soul were in his lips.

"Yvonne—listen. I am not going to ask you to forgive my folly, because you did forgive it long ago. Ah, yes, Yvonne, I have not forgotten. I said it would be something for me to carry through life; and I will never forget. Yes, she is dead, Yvonne; but listen to me; *all the past is dead.* Look, here we are back upon the steamer again; with the sunshine, and the blue water, and the little white clouds. Ah, Yvonne, sweet Yvonne, do you remember?"

The wind howled; the waves beat; the vessel tossed; a cold drifting snow mingled with the departing storm, and eight bells rang. What have imperfections to do with love? What has a storm to do with peace? To this woman it seemed as if the tossing steamer had turned to gold; and the raging waters, and howling wind, to a fairy dream of some fabulous enchantment; and life itself to one long sunbeam; the name of life and the name of the sunbeam—Paul.

To this man the past was as a nightmare; and the present the awakening from the nightmare; and the future a fair landscape, and a smiling, everlasting summer's day!

PETER MACKEY'S THREE SWEETHEARTS.

THOUGH I am, I suppose, an old maid, I take much interest in other people's love affairs. My friends know and humour this little weakness, and consequently in the course of twenty years or so I have collected a large number of love-stories. They are of all kinds—sad, joyful, touching, absurd, sentimental, or eccentric. But perhaps the oddest of them all is the one I am about to relate.

The reasons which decided me to spend a twelvemonth in a certain little Aberdeenshire village, unknown to common ken, need not be entered into here. I had a cottage to myself, and one maid-servant, by name Mary Duthie. And what a pretty creature she was, with her golden hair and big grey eyes, and tall supple figure. It was a real pleasure to see her at her work, in her spotless lilac gown and tucked-up sleeves, and to watch the fascinating, unconscious grace with which she did the simplest thing.

I am afraid I spoiled that girl. She was engaged to Jem Leslie, a farmer's son, who nearly worried the life out of her by his jealousy —for which I suspect he had sometimes cause. The two quarrelled nearly every Sabbath, but always made it up again in the course of the week; so that I was by no means surprised when Mary informed me one day that she had broken off with Jem Leslie for ever; but very much astonished indeed to hear a few weeks later, that she had promised herself to Peter Mackey.

"Well, Mary," I said to her, "I do not wish to intermeddle with love-affairs, but I must say that I think Jem the better man of the two."

But Mary tossed her pretty head and remarked with reference to her rejected lover, that "she was weary o' the creature's havers, an' had jist tauld him that he needna' fash himsel' aboot her ony mair, for she cud e'en tak' care o' her nain sel'." Peter Mackey, she told me, was about to start for Aberdeen, a well-to-do uncle having found a good situation for him there.

I knew something of Mr. Peter, as he was my landlord's only son. He was a tall handsome young fellow, with a "gweed aneuch heid," as his father used to say, but an all-too-susceptible heart. A pretty face captivated him directly, though his attachments were generally more violent than lasting. I had made up my mind that he would marry Jeanie Saunderson, a handsome enough lassie, a good housekeeper, and an heiress in a small way; but Jeanie had left five or six months ago for London, to visit an infirm aunt, and now Peter was engaged to Mary Duthie. I was vexed about the whole affair, especially as I sympathised with poor Jem Leslie. Yet certainly it was no concern of mine.

I do not think that Mary ever received any love-letters from Aberdeen. It was not the fashion in her village in those days for lovers to correspond. But she always wore round her neck half of the sixpence which Peter had broken with her, so that I began to be quite in despair for my favourite Jem.

But after three months or so from Peter Mackey's departure for Aberdeen, some little incidents occurred which showed up that young man in his true light.

The first of these events was the return of Jeanie Saunderson from London, and a visit paid by her to her old acquaintance, Mary Duthie. The two girls had not been together more than a quarter of an hour, when sounds of violent weeping proceeded from the kitchen. Hastening in to see what was the matter, I found Jeanie and Mary mingling their tears over some letters which lay on the table. Jeanie greeted me respectfully, and on my enquiring the cause of their grief, handed me a letter, saying:

"Will ye be pleased to read that, mem?"

It was an effusion of Peter Mackey's, dated nine months back. It began, "My dearest Jeanie," spoke of the writer's unalterable affection, reminded Jeanie of her promise to become his wife as soon as he should be able to provide a suitable home for her, and was signed, "Your own Patie."

I must confess that my first feeling on reading this, was one of satisfaction at my own discernment. "So you were engaged after all," I remarked; "but why was nothing said about it, and why was it broken off?"

"Ou," said Jeanie, looking at me indignantly, "Patie just asked me to be his wife the vera day before I sailed, so there wasna muckle time to lat it be known. And as for 'ts being 'broken off,' it's Patie ye must speir at aboot that, for I never heard tell o't till this day. Eh! but men are deceivers! But that's no' the warst o't, mem! Mary, give the lady Mrs. Birket's letter."

Mrs. Birket, it appeared, was Peter's landlady in Aberdeen, and had written that morning to Mary Duthie's mother, whom she had known when they were girls together, to ask some particulars of Peter's family and antecedents, as her niece and adopted daughter Mary Hine, was soon to be married to him.

"Heard ye ever the like o' that!" exclaimed Jeanie; "the man must be clean daft!"

I quite agreed with her, for I had never known a man before who was engaged to three women at once. Doubtless, Peter considered his first two affairs as mere flirtations; still his former sweethearts had in their possession a letter and a pledge which would be evidence against him in a court of law. But any proceeding of this kind was so foreign to the natures and prejudices of the injured girls, that I did no more than hint at it.

The following morning, Mary asked my permission to go for a day

or two to Aberdeen with Jeanie Saunderson, as they had thought of a plan for bringing their recalcitrant lover to his senses.

"Gin we dinna' mak' Peter think shame to himsel', my name's no' Jeanie Saunderson," were the parting words of that damsel.

Meanwhile, Peter was happy in the society of his (latest) betrothed, who was a very charming girl; and it may be a little to my hero's excuse to remark that few men could have seen her bonny face and listened to her sweet voice evening after evening without falling in love with her. The susceptible Peter certainly could not, but throwing all old memories to the winds, proposed and was accepted.

Such being the state of affairs, Peter's feelings may be imagined when, on entering Mrs. Birket's parlour one evening, after his day's work was over, he saw seated by Mary Hine—Mary Duthie and Jeanie Saunderson.

Peter's first impulse was to withdraw hastily, but Mrs. Birket made flight impossible by closing the door, and standing between it and the conscience-stricken youth. "Just tak' a seat, Mr. Mackey," said she, and the culprit sank into an empty chair, placed at a little distance from the other three ladies. The situation was awkward in the extreme. The ladies continued their knitting without glancing at him; minute after minute passed, and the silence became intolerable. Peter could hear the beating of his own heart; twice he opened his lips to speak, but no sound issued from them; an icy tremor ran through his frame, and checked his utterance.

I give what follows verbatim, as reported to me by Mary Duthie.

"Weel," said Jeanie Saunderson at last, "sanna we be sattlin' oor bizness eenoo?"

"Aye, lassies," said Mary Hine, "but that 'll be a haird matter, or I'm muckle mista'en."

"Ye see," said Jeanie, taking the initiative, "this Peter Mackey belongs in a manner till's a'. Ist na sae?"

"Aye, but we canna a' hae him."

"Just that. Noo, fat think ye, lassies? Sanna we appeal till the law-courts?"

"Mithna we jist set a' richt amo' oorsels?" said Mary Hine. "Foo gin we wus till cast lots for him? We've the warrant of Scripter for that, ye ken."

"Vera gweed," replied the others, and when Mrs. Birket had volunteered herself as one witness, the little servant-girl, Baubie, was called ben to be another. Peter's humiliation was certainly to be complete!

The lot fell on Mary Duthie.

"Peter Mackey," said she, "I ha'e anither string till my bow, so I'll e'en leave ye till Mary Hine or Jeanie; they're maybe wuntin' ye mair nor me. But mony thanks t' ye for yer kind offer, which I ha'e na forgotten."

Peter was too much subdued to offer a word in his own defence, and the proceedings were renewed.

This time the lot fell to Mary Hine.

"Peter," she said, "I winna' cast up till ye hoo ye ha'e wronged me an' ithers. But this I maun say, a bad lover's no like to mak' a gweed husban', so I'll leave ye to Jeanie, if she's carin' to tak' ye."

"Weel, Patie," said Jeanie, "gin abody refeeses ye I maun e'en ha'e ye mysel'. But it's on twa condeetions, min' ye. First that we'll be marriet this day month, an' second that there'll be nae mair o' these ongaens *aifter* marriage."

The wedding took place in due course, and Peter proved to be a most devoted and obedient husband. "Ye see, Mary 'oman," said Jeanie one day to Mrs. Jem Leslie (formerly Mary Duthie), "gin the gweed man sud turn whiles a bit camsteary an' oonrizzonable, I ha'e but till say till him, 'Weel, Patie, my man, it's a sair peety that Mary Duthie an' Mary Hine refeest ye, sin' the wife ye ha'e gotten disna' suit ye,' an' weel-a-wat or ever the words are weel owre my lips, he's jist as quaet's a lamb."

E. A. B.

JUNE ROSES.

They tremble over the garden-wall,
  Laying their pure white cheeks together,
And holding a confab, great and small,
  Over the drowsy weather.

They sleep, sun-touch'd, by the straggling fence,
  Shrin'd in their leaves, like a way-side saint,
Great crimson drifts, where the breeze grows dense,
  And the pilgrim insects faint.

Oh, gather them in where I sit and write,
  Let the floor be strewn with their fragrant leaves;
O'er this broad, deep sill let them fall at night,
  From their nest in the hanging eaves!

And my busy life will drop a care
  In each deep, red heart where the light reposes;
Oh, June! thy children all are fair,
  But fairest are thy roses!

E. C. D.

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The Argosy

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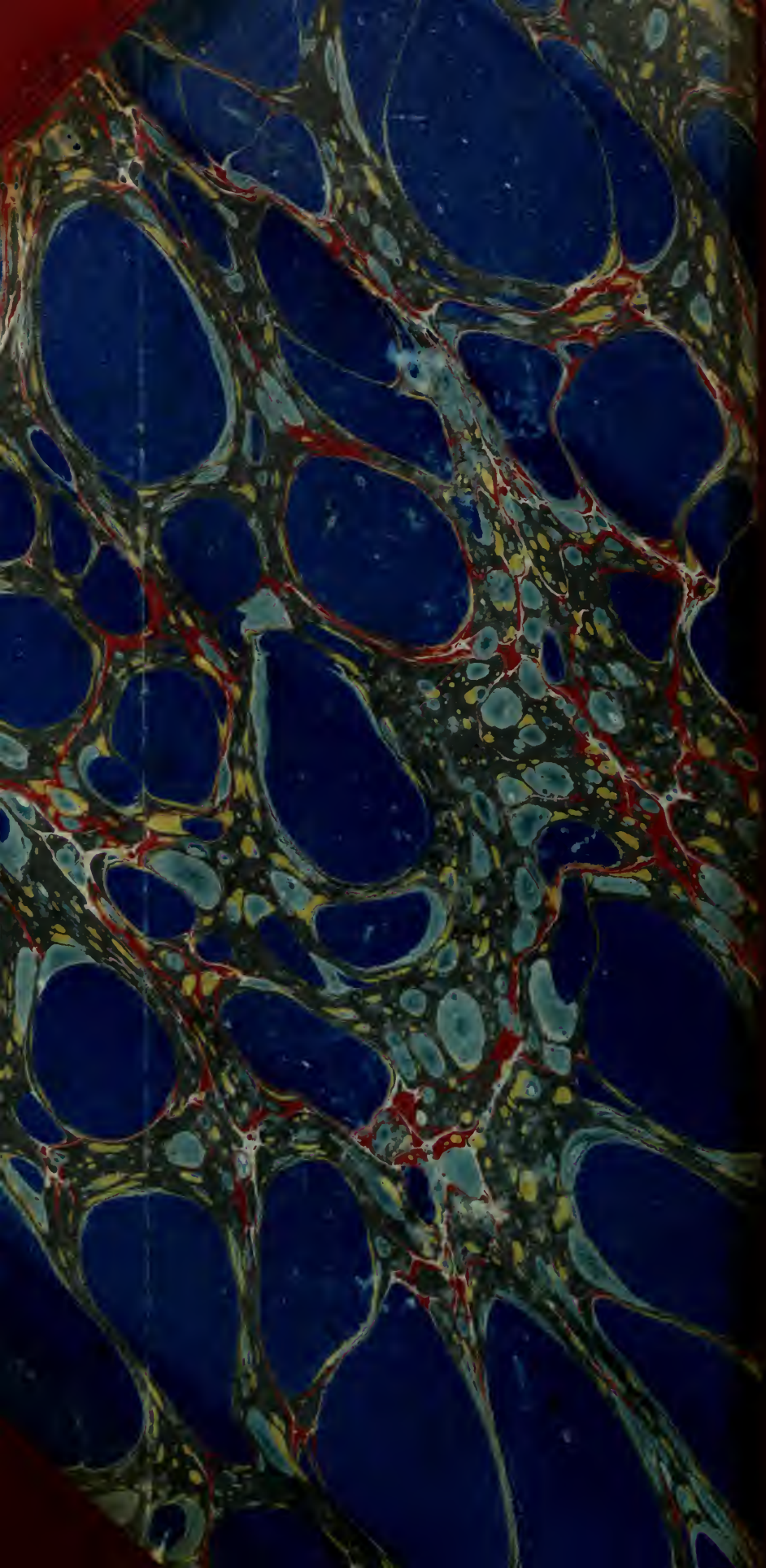
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